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Editorial Page

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EDITORIAL

The *ERJSSH* is entering its fourth year of existence. The *Journal* remains faithful to its commitment to publish sound academic research produced in Ethiopia and beyond its borders. Until the present one five issues of *ERJSSH* have been published. In total twenty five original research articles have been issued as well as one discussion article, six academic news and fifteen book reviews.

The current issue of *ERJSSH* features four research articles, two academic news and five book reviews. The four research articles delve on different topics concerning past and present Ethiopian societies. In “Integration Dilemmas Faced by Ethiopian Immigrants in Toronto, Canada”, Busha Taa discusses a highly relevant theme for the current Ethiopian society. Indeed, since at least the 1970s Ethiopia has been an origin country of important migration waves and thus sizeable Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporas exist today in such countries as the United States, Canada, Australia and Germany. Focusing on one of the largest diaspora communities, which has been established in the city of Toronto, Busha inquires into the dilemmas faced by the migrants, who often reach their destination imbued of high expectations about their host country but instead end up facing social hostility and having to go through countless bureaucratic hurdles. Therefore the self-chosen exile of many a migrant becomes a true quagmire from where the migrant might be only rescued by those organizations formed by the migrants themselves and not by the structures of a modern welfare state wherein migrants rarely manage to integrate. In “Friend, Stranger, Enemy: Ethiopian Oral Traditions on the Abbay (Blue Nile) River” Ebrahim Damtew studies the rich lore of oral traditions of Ethiopian societies in order to explore perceptions on the Abbay (Blue Nile) among Amhara societies. The study sheds light on the attitude of local Ethiopian peoples towards this mighty river, the largest in the African continent. Respected, revered and even worshiped, the Nile has also been the focus of popular contempt and derision. “Traditional Cultural Heritage Management Practices in Church Property: The Case of Debre Medahnit Dekwa Kidanemihret, Ethiopia” by Marshet Girmay explores another relevant theme in today’s Ethiopian society. The country is the home to a rich cultural and artistic heritage related to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. This heritage has been preserved for centuries by a set of customary and traditional norms and practices. The study of the heritage preserved at the important Gondarine church of Dekwa Kidanemihret near Dabat town sheds light on some of the traditional management practices concerning historical goods. Finally, the last research article, “Components of the Recent Fertility Decline in Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia: A Decomposition Analysis of Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey”, by Getachew Nibret, Nega Mihret, and Tariku Dejene, studies some recent demographic trends in the Amhara region. The study discusses the sociological causes of the recent fertility decline in Amhara National Regional State as shown in the recent Demographic and Health Survey. In a country as Ethiopia, which in the recent decades has been experiencing a huge

population boom but still lacks a proper full-scale census, such kind of studies are strongly needed in order to help the state to properly implement policies for the benefit of the population.

After presenting the contents of its newest issue, *ERJSSH* makes a new call to scholars, academics and intellectuals, in Ethiopia and abroad, to submit their texts for publication. The *Journal* accepts research articles and discussion articles with a universal scope, that is not necessarily related to Ethiopia or the African continent.

Finally, the publication of the present December 2016 issue was delayed due to several factors. The result is that it could not be released until March 2017. This, however, gave us time to incorporate two new members to the editorial team, Dr Busha Taa, a sociologist, and Dr Sonja John, a political scientist. Both bring precious expertise in fields so far not covered by other *ERJSSH* editorial team members as well as a solid experience in academic editorial work. From these lines I want to welcome them and wish them a lasting and fruitful work among us.

Andreu Martinez
Managing editor

RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTEGRATION DILEMMAS FACED BY ETHIOPIAN IMMIGRANTS IN TORONTO, CANADA

Busha Taa¹

ABSTRACT

This study explores the difficulties that the Ethiopian immigrants encounter in their attempts to adapt to the Canadian society during the last twenty years. Although the journey of these immigrants seemed adventurous, the completion of their journey was strained by the collision of despair against optimism. Their rosy settlement ventures were dreadfully marred as their hopes were unexpectedly displaced by anguish and frustration. Prevailing social realities curbed their ability to define their identities and eroded their talent in negotiating power relationships. Settling in Toronto came with certain level of disempowering and unsettled blights generated by social and economic despondency but it also has served forced migrants to temporarily feel relieved. Nevertheless, unemployment and low economic status of Ethiopian immigrants has restricted their freedom and compelled them to regularly drift rather than integrating. Consequently, the migratory blushing scenario with its magnetic power has failed these immigrants at their destinations. The loss of social and unique cultural capital as well as the incompatibility of their human capital with that of the host society has triggered the perpetual frustration of their aspirations. The deferred ambitions have strongly affected their emotional well-being in every nook and cranny of Toronto. However, Ethiopian immigrants were not passive spectators of their own plights but they remained active respondents to situations. Hence, they created mahibers, edirs and ekubs in order to overcome despondencies they encountered year after year.

Keywords: Toronto, migration, capitals, identity, community, Ethiopian diaspora, edir, mahiber, ekub.

THE ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY IN TORONTO

Back in the early 1970s Ethiopia was highly affected by devastating famines, skyrocketing oil prices and huge inflation, which caused massive up-
roars. Consequently, the popularity of the late Emperor Hayle Sillase I dwindled and uncontrollable popular pursuing precipitated his downfall (Legum, 1975). The riots led to the deposing of the emperor and exacerbated a high volume of emigration. During the Derg regime (1974-1991), which put into action a regime of military rule all over the country, further migration waves ensued.

According to the World Refugee Survey (1993), in 1993 there were 230,000 Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, Kenya and Djibouti. Many of these refugees got resettlement opportunities in Canada and most of them flocked to Toronto as the preferred destination. Their choice was not at random as To-

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ronto had become one of the preferred destinations for world migrants. Thus, out of 250,000 immigrants that Canada admitted in 2001, 125,062 of them settled in Toronto while only 44 immigrants settled in New Found Land in the same year (Statistics Canada, 2011). It is due to its tolerant social milieu that Toronto hosted the largest number of Ethiopian immigrants. Ethiopians moved to Toronto from regions hit by economic recession, places that host rampant discrimination and a society that does not have appetite for diversity. Hence, in the eyes of the unemployed and discriminated Ethiopians, Toronto, with a high concentration of compatriots was a sanctuary and an ideal place to live.

Currently there are 45,000 to 50,000 Ethiopian immigrants in Toronto and in its vicinity (Fenta, Hyman, Rourke, Moon & Noh, 2010). These immigrants and refugees came under family reunion and convention refugees classes—hence some were forced emigrants while others were those who left Ethiopia voluntarily. Some of these immigrants have come via Europe, Middle East, and Africa. Others have come through other Canadian provinces and cities (Taa, 2003). Again, many others have come from USA—especially after September 11, 2001.

A large number of Ethiopian immigrants in Toronto suffer from lack of employment, shortage of affordable housing and subtle discriminations. As a result, they cannot fulfil their social obligations such as sending money to their families back home. The ensued frustration led to desperation and five people committed suicide only within seven months in the 1990s (Mequanent, 1994). These people died either by drowning in Lake Ontario or throwing themselves before the Toronto subway trains. Existing Canadian institutions could not mitigate the social woes from which the Ethiopian community has suffered, and is still suffering (Gupta, 1996). Accordingly, Ethiopian immigrants ventured to mediate the stressors by forming traditional, religious and community organizations. As the list of the organizations that were created is too long, this study focuses only on organizations that are relevant in mass mobilization and participation.

The purpose of this paper is to critically reassess the—oftentimes too rosy—picture painted by consultants about the splendour of migration. It is the belief of the author that migration should not be always wholeheartedly embraced. Indeed, those who migrate out of fear of persecution shall be encouraged and given support. Yet, the author is also persuaded that those who leave the country for economic reasons should strive to improve their livelihoods by staying in their home countries. No dream land can fare better than the land where one's biblical cord is cut and buried. In this paper it is suggested that leaving one's own country with the wish of attaining a better life somewhere else is not always viable. Among the questions that have been adequately addressed are: What are the obstacles to integration? In what ways have Ethiopian immigrants attempted to overcome the problems? How have they used their indigenous organizations in order to ameliorate their lives in Toronto?

In developing this analysis, the study conducted on the integration *Experience of the Ethiopian Community of Toronto* in 2011 is widely utilized. While

the original mixed method study of the 2011 was huge in size—consisting over five hundred variables, this study picked forty variables amenable for this qualitative reanalysis. Although detailed outlining of the variables that are reanalysed is beyond the scope of this paper, all the variables selected for secondary analysis were very central to the issues of immigrants' integration, indigenous mode of thoughts, informal and informal organizations in solving social problems. The relevance of the variables to triggering or inhibiting discrimination, prejudice as well as their importance for networking purposes was appropriately determined—to the satisfaction of the principles of secondary analysis. All the variables used are broadened through the use of archives, documents and the bylaw of the community associations. Hence, this study is totally based on secondary mode of qualitative inquiry. Moreover, the author was the chair of the board of directors of the Ethiopian community association for over ten years in Toronto. Therefore, the personal insights and cumulative experience alongside his tacit knowledge have played a prominent role in widely articulating the study.

THE ETHIOPIAN ASSOCIATIONS IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA

Several associations have been established in the Greater Toronto Area to provide different services to the Ethiopians living there. The chief one is the Ethiopian Association in the Greater Toronto Area, which was established in 1980 and it obtained legal personality in 1981 (Ethiopian Association Bylaw, 2009). The association is the strongest of all organizations that help other organizations to flourish and thrive. The current focus of the association is to develop and execute health promotion, provision of affordable housing, and facilitating eased settlement process for newcomers (Bretell, 2000). The association has created senior clubs to overcome loneliness, isolation, and home sickness. In addition, the creation of a youth association proved important to educate about the dangers arising from subsistence abuse, violence and HIV/AIDS spread (Taa, 2009). This association is respected by all religious, ethnic, age and gender groups for equally providing employment, housing, and settlement services for all.

As any other community, the Ethiopian community has internal divisions emanated from ethnicity, politics, and gender. Thus, for instance, the biggest ethnic groups of Ethiopia such as Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray have instituted ethnic organizations that play a divisive and diversionary role from the major Ethiopian community interests. The small ethnic groups such as Harari have also created their own ethnic enclaves. Conversely, other small ethnic groups such as the Gurage have chosen to abolish their ethnic organization. By abolishing their organization, the Gurage gave their property with \$10,000 to the Ethiopian Association in the spirit of unity (Ethiopian Association, 2003). Gender is another social marker in dividing and defining the community. Gender differences are visible even in the tempo of integration (Hymen, Tefera & Tizazu, 2008). Ethiopian immigrant women are willing to start schooling from low level, take entry level jobs, socialize with the mainstream society and face less discrimination. Conversely, immigrant Ethiopian men are slower in integration because the dual household administration has taken away their domestic power and forced them to negotiate with their female counterparts (Taa, 2003). Men

enjoyed of superior social positions in Ethiopia and therefore do not want to start jobs from entry level as doing so is considered as complete failure. Therefore, there are criss-crossing of status between male and female, triggering domestic conflicts. Disagreements, separation, and divorces caused stressful situation in their lives. These stressors were reinforced by the lack of employment and the unacceptability of their social/cultural capitals (Kibour, 2006).

UNEMPLOYMENT/UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Many Ethiopian immigrants in Toronto are de-classified and forced to exist without any job (Ben-Sira, 1997). There is a high level of poverty among newcomers to Canada and the Ethiopian case is not an exception. Poverty among newcomers contributes to mental health risks in Canada (Darwish, Joung, Verhulst, Mackenbach & Rijmen, 2004). One in five recent immigrants of working age was living in poverty compared to one in ten other Canadians in 2004 (Fleury, 2007). Even those immigrants who manage to find work are underpaid and underemployed (Statistics Canada, 2011). This scenario unendingly forced immigrants to concentrate in poor neighbourhoods—whose inhabitants have been marginalized and bound to adopt referent groups from an adversarial subculture rather than taking on mainstream values and skills relevant to eventual civic participation (Kasinitiz et al., 2008).

All employed people are expected to meet their peers, upgrade their skills, and strike new relationships at workplaces. They also have the chance to ameliorate their cultural capital through communicative interactions (Wilson-Folsberg, 2015). Yet, many newcomers are denied the opportunity to enter the workforce for various reasons. The problems of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty persisted infinitively bleeding the Ethiopian community. Matsuoka and Sorenson (2001) argued that whereas some Ethiopian immigrants were selected to come to Canada for their education, experience, and qualification and they were nonetheless unable to practice their professions. Their knowledge, which was recognized for the purpose of immigration, was devalued in the process of integration. Ornstein (2000) revealed that seventy percent of Ethiopian immigrants were either unemployed or underemployed. Neuwrith (1989) tried to justify this unemployment by labelling Ethiopian immigrants as backward whose knowledge and experience are incompatible with the needs of the labour market. Neuwrith argued that most of these immigrants were unable to meet occupational entry requirements due to an inadequate command of English or French. Conversely, Beyene (2000) explained that the Ethiopian immigrants suffered from lack of employment due to structural barriers created by hiring policies. Beyene also advanced that the devaluation of their knowledge rather than the lack of knowledge was the main culprit in their unemployment. This author concludes that the Canadian labour market neither recognizes their credentials nor accepts their innate abilities. Similarly, Yang (2000) argued that the shift from goods to service-producing industries, the increasing segmentation of the labour market, the growth of industrial technology, and the relocation of industries out of Canada made immigrants' prior knowledge useless. Various scholars have tried to explain the

reasons for the immigrants' joblessness as lack of pertinent credential, inadequate command of English and lack of Canadian experience. Improving their social, cultural, and human capital as well as job search techniques are said to be crucial factors to integrate into the Canadian workforce. However, ameliorating their skills and qualification could not land them in jobs. Hence, it is necessary to discuss certain problems relevant to the Ethiopian community in Toronto.

THE PROBLEM OF ACCENT AND THE ROLE OF RESUME

Having thick accent and the inability to write resume are triggered by various factors such as lack of human, cultural and social capital. Human capital is a collection of various resources that aid to systematically accomplish the given tasks. It requires knowledge, talents, skills, abilities, experience, intelligence, training, judgment, and wisdom possessed individually and collectively. Human capital is consistently criticized in several ways. Michael Spence (1973 and 2002) emphatically presented the signaling theory as an alternative to human capital. Also, Pierre Bourdieu (1986) proposed a conceptual alternative to human capital that included cultural capital, social capital, economic capital, and symbolic capital. These critiques emphasized that human capital is a reified concept with no descriptive clout. Many other theorists (Magrassi, 2002; Syeily, 1997) tried to break down human capital into various components for analysis by referring to it as intangibles.

The Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) encouraged governments to embrace policies that help innovation, knowledge production and proper services allocations as a path to prosperity. In recent times, most international policies have commenced to tackle human capital flight to reduce the loss of trained persons from a country that invested in them (Brain, 2007). It is possible to conclude that human capital is the product of schooling to acquire disciplinary knowledge with the objective of gaining valuable returns. In the case of the Ethiopian community, education has not yet assisted well-educated immigrants to realize their aspirations. The return from education and experience is not readily forthcoming. Many newcomers have attended Canadian higher education to acquire knowledge and skills that are needed in the labour market but could not secure jobs. The lack of job had emanated from the lack of relevant social and cultural capital. However, not finding jobs after acquiring social and cultural capital makes the argument for the development of human capital meaningless.

In effect, the return from education declines as the investment in education rises, contradicting the assumption of human capital theory. Hence, human capital theory equates the amount of schooling with economic gains—arguing that more schooling leads to higher productivity, and higher productivity leads to individual success (Becker, 1964). However, only under very specific situations do education and success coincide. The gaining of knowledge itself does not guarantee the acquisition of a job and the ability to gain human capital and the inability to reap its rewards force newcomers to Toronto retreat to their indigenous camps that serve them as sanctuary.

By going to schools and obtaining degrees after degrees, immigrants exacerbated the pre-existing credential inflation in Toronto. Therefore, contrary to human capital theory, collective investment in education constantly increases, while compensations for works that are done regularly decrease. Given these complexities, the Ethiopian immigrants are not only low paid but also forced to dangle without any prospect for jobs.

In recent times, social assistance in Toronto has become tied to work and training. However, welfare payments are not an equivalent compensation for the work people do in the name of workfare. Nonetheless, workfare combines two mutually incompatible objectives: (a) deterrence-making recipients work at jobs that are difficult, stigmatized, and low paid in order to discourage them from choosing welfare over work; and (b) educative-to teach skills, attitudes and inculcate self-esteem (Gewirth, 1996). The latter objective is thwarted by the stereotype that regards work as a deterrent-work as punishment not as reward. Thus, the attempt to develop human capital through workfare does not equip immigrants with relevant host-knowledge

In terms of resume, Ethiopians did not have much acquaintance with it. They are state-led people in all aspects of their lives and the government is still the biggest employer. Until recently, graduating students did not have to write résumés or attend interviews. Therefore, there is a procedural difference between what Ethiopian immigrants know about job search and what they are expected to do in Canada. In Ethiopia, people used to go to school just to become clerks, teachers, or pilots. Very few people aspire to work in more than one field. Also, Ethiopians do not know much about résumé and they tend to pay for someone to write their own résumé upon arrival. However, the problems of résumés prepared by professional writers are that writers use host language that goes beyond the capacities of immigrants to comprehend. When taking their résumés to employers, immigrants cannot explain the content of their résumés (Taa, 2003). Such problems arise from miscommunication between professional writers and service seekers who do not contribute important ideas to résumé writing. Also, the notion of résumés contradicts the beliefs of Ethiopian immigrants. Deeply-rooted cultural norms compel many Ethiopians not to talk about themselves to other people but to expect others to talk about them—talking about one's own accomplishments is considered boasting. Besides, some community members consider the whole exercise of résumé writing inappropriate, because people provide inaccurate information in order to obtain jobs. Consequently, people who honestly provide accurate work experience remain jobless.

In addition, many Ethiopians are shy and rarely exhibit their desires, feelings and motives in public. The courage of advocating one's point of view for personal gain is contrary to most Ethiopians' beliefs. Many of these immigrants choose to listen instead of speaking in strange environments. These taboos slow down the speed of their participation in the mainstream labour market. Yet, an acute deterrence to their integration is the lack of employment that made them professional job seekers. As looking for job in the sluggish labour market becomes useless, they return to their roots. The

re-identification process transpires through forming or joining existing formal/informal Ethiopian institutions.

One of the reasons for their inability to write proper resume is a lack of compatible cultural capital with the Canadian society. The concept of cultural capital originated in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1979) who defined it as high cultural knowledge that ultimately rebounds to the owner's financial and social advantage. In some cases, cultural capital is prohibitively inconvenient and invisible to tangibly acquire. Most people normally gain cultural capital informally after growing to maturity in a given socioeconomic households/life-span.

Cultural capital can only be acquired by a long-term occupancy on a given space and extensive acquaintance with people and entities at a given location. Ethiopia did not have cultural ties with Canada and thus the incongruence between both the Ethiopian and Canadian culture is justifiable. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) argued that the cultural codes and cultural capital of some groups lead to success while the cultural incompatibility of others leads to failure. These theorists argue for cultural reproduction to the extent of fixed destiny. Both theorists emphasized culture as static and cultural capital as inherited not learned. They denigrated the modern contours of the knowledge society and the ability of newcomers to learn and adapt to changing social realities. In sharp contrast, immigrants are quick learners who acquire knowledge that enables them to translate their ambitions into reality (Basran, 1998). Nonetheless, the host society could not furnish immigrants with quality relationship in order to realize their aspiration. In fact, not all immigrants are blindly imprisoned by their own cultures but are ready to learn and adopt whenever suitable situations are available.

Most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment. Bourdieu, (1986) argued that the accumulation of capital is an embodied state in the form of cultivation. The transmission of cultural capital is significantly different from the transmission of economic capital. The transmission operates as a mechanism of social reproduction primarily within the family in both cases. While the transmission of economic capital can be affected through gifts or bequests, the transmission of cultural capital passes through the processes of socialization (Bourdieu 1973). Thus, the transmission of cultural capital takes longer time and language is the pivotal instrument in cultural capital. Bourdieu (1991) argued that linguistic capital serves as a system of sanction and censorship. Here, linguistic capital refers to a capacity to adequately use language with the appropriate vocabulary and proper pauses during conversation. Thus, low-level linguistic capital undoubtedly leads to low-paying jobs. Those with low-level cultural capital may not only fall into low-paying jobs but they may also remain in low paying jobs without promotions if they are lucky enough to get jobs. It seems that most of the Ethiopian immigrants are incessantly trapped and remain at the initial stage of the social ladder remaining either unemployed or underemployed.

Having thick accent deterred smooth integration of the Ethiopian immigrants. The perception of accents involves the categorization of speakers into social groups, entailing judgments about the status and personality of the speakers (Dailey, Giles & Jansma 2005; Ross, 1954). Recent research has investigated the effects of accent on account of eyewitness memory but based on what a person heard rather than saw. The study showed that ear-witnesses were more likely to mistake offenders with a different accent than their own-accent, and that their judgments were less accurate in reporting other-accent offenders compared to those with their own-accent (Stevenage, Clarke, McNeill, 2012). Also, research focusing on the development of ones' own-accent bias in infants and children has shown that both infants and children are unable to differentiate between foreign and native accents (Floccia, Butler, Girard & Goslin, 2009; Girard, Floccia & Goslin, 2008).

Everyone speaks with an accent and accent is the unique way that speech is pronounced. A person's accent depends on many factors and accents are thus usually grouped in three ways. First, regional accent: this is the accent of specific region in a given country. For example, people living in Northern Gondar have different accent from those living in Shoa. Second, foreign accent: this is the accent of different nationalities and it can reflect international boundaries. For example, people raised up speaking Amharic definitely sound different from those raised up speaking English. Third, homogenously qualified accent: this is the language spoken by people of the same phonocentric utterance. For example, English people in the British Islands speak with the same accent and tone.

Derrida (cited in West, 1996) claims that speech (phonocentrism) is a more transparent medium of thought than writing. An accent is a form of local capital that serves as a means of categorizing people into groups. For this reason, many employers think that language is primarily a tool of communication rather than cognition (Binswanger & Peikoff, 1990). The English language has many colours and these colours are mediated by accent. An accent also serves to exclude or include people in participation and socialization. Those people whose accents are deemed different from the mainstream can be labelled as 'others.' Amin (2000) argues that mainstream Canadian labour markets consider "accentified English as substandard English". However, when employers turn down applicants, they refer to immigrants' lack of working knowledge in order to justify their refusals. Also, Lippi-Green, (1997) argued that native English speakers consider that accentified speech destroys the elegance and prestige of the language. They accuse accentuated English of being incommunicable by making thoughts unintelligible. At present, accents have become primary gate-keeping tools in the areas of employment, socialization and integration. Hence, immigrants who acquire knowledge compatible with the Canadian labour markets may not be employed, due to their varying accents.

As fear of discrimination mounts, some Ethiopian immigrants joined accent reduction classes to win acceptance. Nonetheless, they could not even partially mitigate their thick accents. Even if they could have managed to completely eliminate their accent, discrimination might not disappear and their attempts would have remained futile. Instead of learning basic grammar

and pronunciation, they tended to contract English language in order to copy the mainstream accent. However, these immigrants should have focused on the most fundamental elements of English language that could have assisted them to successfully integrate into the host society. In act, the posturing of de-accentification was forced upon them by labour markets that prefer local accents. Preying on insecurities of non-native speakers and their wishes to fit in, the accent-elimination business promised that immigrants can increase intelligibility, gain confidence, eliminate barriers and even improve professional image through accent reduction therapy and speech pathology. However, the “de-accentification” classes added nothing rather than robbing destitute immigrants. Many employers missed the crucial point that human intelligence grows not by the way people speak but by the way they think. In the eyes of some employers, language is not only the medium of communication for relaying contents but rather it is itself a value laden content for promoting communal loyalties (Coetzee, 1998).

All these problems emanated from the immigrant’s lack of compatible social capital. Social capitals are born out of interactions, networking and socializations. The term social capital emphasizes not just warm and cuddly feelings, but a wide variety of quite specific benefits that flow from trust, reciprocity, and cooperation associated with social networks. In order to create value for the people who are connected (Potapchuk, Crocker & Schecter, 1997). Correlates of high levels of social capital include education (Smith, Beaulieu & Seraphine, 1995; Teachman, Paasch & Carver, 1996), health (Smith, 1997), confidence in political institutions (Brehm & Rahn, 1997), and satisfaction with government (Putnam, 1993). Mentoring, networking, and mutual support associated with high levels of social capital are partial causes of success in education (Coleman, 1988; Loury, 1977). Various mutual supports also are associated with self-reliant economic development without need for government intervention (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1993). Therefore, social capital refers to the collective value of all “social networks” [who people know] and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other [“norms of reciprocity”]. A norm of a culture high in social capital is reciprocity because it encourages bargaining, compromise, and pluralistic politics. Another norm in social capital is a belief in the equality of citizens, which promotes the formation of cross-cutting groups. The members of the Ethiopian community could not attain adequate social capital upon arrival at their destination because they did not have networking experience. At the time of their arrival in Toronto, Canada provided them with necessary materials in the first euphoric months. However, social capital was not one of those materials because it is something to be earned not given.

Balantti and Falk (2002) argued that social capital theory emerged in the late twentieth century. Fundamental to this theory is the proposition that relationships are resources that can facilitate access to vital resources. Similarly, Faist (2000) argued that social capital is tied to interests, norms, and expressions that are contained in a web of varying knowledge. Therefore, social capital does not refer to material in the hands of individuals, but, rather, to the quality of relationships experienced by these individuals. The process of sharing social capital permits the establishment of trust

among individuals. Mostly, the Ethiopian immigrants do not openly express their feelings and are not assertive enough although they know more than they express. They remain silent—the silence that leads to disconnection with the larger society. Such disconnection deters the development of social capital—that can only be produced through purposeful and goal oriented participation. Moreover, the process of moving out of the country, separating from family, and coming to Canada has created loneliness and nomadism in the minds of many Ethiopian immigrants. Ironically, some of the loneliest individuals are surrounded by people most of the days. Thus, loneliness is not about a lack of relationships and interactions but rather it is about the lack of quality interactions (Burger 2004) and loneliness occurs when the relationship is less satisfying. Those lonely people also evaluate themselves negatively to the extent of eroding their own self-confidence. The lack of high self-esteem triggers anxiety, anger, and frustration. Thus, members of the Ethiopian community could not foster communicative, interactive, and durable relationships that are out-bounded towards the host society.

Although many acute problems emanate from the lack of useful networking, establishing credible network is extremely laborious for Ethiopian immigrants who have no deep connection with people in the city. Also, some of the Ethiopian immigrants consider networking as nepotism, being sceptical of its relevance. Conversely, according to Aristotle, human being is a social being who is “by nature an animal intended to live in *polis*” (cited in Backer, 1950). Here, networking doctrine exhibits the impossibility for individuals to live in isolation. Networking involves appreciating one another’s views and making decisions on the basis of acquired information. Many Ethiopians who have come to Canada with the support of their networks reasonably pass through transition, which is not the case with those who cannot rely on networks.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL NETWORKS OF ETHIOPIANS IN TORONTO

Religious organizations

There are several Ethiopian religious institutions in Toronto: four Orthodox Christian churches, four Evangelical churches, one Catholic Church, and one mosque. Each of them has thousands of congregants that receive services. Out of the Orthodox churches, the Medihanelem Church is created and administered by Rastafarians—followers of Emperor Haile Selassie. These are Jamaicans, Ethiopians or Canadians who believe that Ethiopia is their country and thus Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is their true religion. All of the Ethiopian churches/mosques conduct individual counselling.

All religious institutions carry social and moral responsibility to support people in time of loss and gain. The churches and mosques are well versed in order to accomplish their humane mission to serve without discrimination. These religious institutions are cornerstones of unity within the Ethiopian community (Ayele, 1998). Also, many of the churches play vital role of alleviating poverty by passing necessary and timely information to Canadian decision-makers. Specifically, churches organize indigenous networks

that involve in employment assistance. These networks rely on dedicated volunteers, who incessantly search for jobs in order to help friends. The primary focus of volunteering is to promote charity work—work whose reward is social prestige and respect. Besides, these religious organizations have an internal capacity to mobilize communities toward employment (Channell, 2000). Alongside economic motives, religious affiliation offers a sense of security, peace of mind and interpersonal gratification during periods of uncertainty and stress (Scott, Scott & Stumpf, 1989). For this reason, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians tend to score higher in psychiatric symptoms than non-Coptic Christians (Noh, Hyman & Fenta, 2001).

Informal organizations

No adequate attention is paid to informal networks of resources exchange and support groups in immigrant/refugee studies (Beiser, et al., 2012). Most of the literatures focus on government and NGO sectors. Informal organizations such as the one found in the Ethiopian community in Toronto are considered “backward and unproductive.” Perceptions and attitudes held by officials about these organizations have always led policy makers to underestimate the viability of grass-root organizations. These informal organizations consist of people who share the same sentiments and perspectives on the basis of common national origin, friendships and family ties. Among the Ethiopian community in Toronto ‘informal’ organizations such as *mahiber*, *edir* and *ekub* play an important role.

Epidemiological study (Noh, Hymean & Fenta, 2001) conducted on the Ethiopian Community in Toronto showed that the extent of estimated lifetime prevalence of depression to be 9.8%. This is three times higher than the rate estimated for southern Ethiopia (Awais, Kebede & Alem, 1999). All researchers were concerned about the impact of post-migration changes on Ethiopian couples and agreed that there was a definite role for community and religious institutions to prevent marital conflict. Moreover, researches on the preadolescent Ethiopians in Toronto reported more internalizing problems than did their counterparts in Ethiopia (Beiser et al., 2012) because they do not possess sufficient resources that enable them to gain quality networks. Many informal organizations such as *mahiber* and *equb* not only provide mutual aid but also enable immigrants to reassert their identities.

Mahiber can be defined as an association of people with common social, cultural, psychological, and religious interests. In the words of Tadesse Tamrat (1972), *mahiber* is a deep-seated social fabric that cherishes peace, unity, and solidarity. Although the Ethiopian culture entertains various kinds of *mahiber*, this paper only focuses on religious *mahiber* that has strong roots in Toronto. The members of *mahiber* can extend from ten to twelve; elect a *muse* who acts as a chairperson. The name *muse* came from a biblical story related to Moses, who led Jewish people to overcome miseries with the help of God. Thus, the *muse* is expected to deliver, like Moses. However, the practical function of the *muse* cannot go beyond leading prayers, arousing traditional Ethiopian sentiments and resolving disputes between members. Thus, *mahiber* operates within the Ethiopian religious spirit relying on orality (Mequanent, 1994). These *mahibers* are social com-

munions established in the name of multitude of angels/saints. These associations have social, ritual and spiritual purposes; they bring people from every ethnic group and socioeconomic status together for festivities and prayers. Members take turns preparing food every month in the name of the angel under whose name the *mahiber* is organized. The drinks prepared for such occasions are called *tsiwa* (holy); the *tsiwa* rotate from one house to another every month (Sable Selassie, 1972). *Mahiber* is also a social setting in which members exchange memorable and educative stories from the past. During the gatherings, members resolve riddles that demand intricate thinking. At other times, they discuss nature, states, societies, and environments. Thus, this association has epistemological relevance beyond emotional and psychological companionship. The members of *mahiber* support those who lag behind the group in social, economic, and educational fields (Taa, 2009). This organization mediates the past and the present of its members in multicultural Toronto. *Mahiber* serves to strengthen their spirituality and indigenouness to fill the voids left by Canadian institutions.

As discussed by Levine (1965) *edir* is a social organization by which people support each other in time of social crises. *Edir* can only be established on good social relationships; it takes responsibility for burying the dead, helping the sick and providing financial support for grieving families. During losses in families, members console each other by providing foods, cleaning houses, announcing losses, and hosting guests that come to pay tribute to the deceased person (Hibret Edir, 2013). Members depend on each other in times of thick and thin. For this reason, some Ethiopian immigrants do not want to engage with insurance companies because companies do not pay attentions to humane activities such as burying the dead or consoling grieving families. Some insurance companies even do not pay the money on the basis of enrolment agreements. People create *edir* to deter strains caused by insurance companies during loses in families. Hence, *edir* is a psychological safety net to uplift the morality of the members (Taa, 2009). The bylaws of *edirs* are based on morality and ethical code of conduct than legality. Because it is a voluntary self help association, the members emphasize morality. Nonetheless, the members are obliged to observe legality, equity, and dignity. Thus, *edir* is inclusive and it does not operate on ethnic, religious, or gender basis.

Ekub is a semi-formal organization that is created for mutual benefits in order to avert financial crises. As an informal social institution, whose formation depends on financial situation of its members, it is highly immersed in trust and cooperation. People establish *ekub* and contribute money to assist each other for marriage, buying house, defending lawsuits, and other important social matters. *Ekub* can be taken either on the basis of needs or *ita* (lottery). For some, it is the forced saving that cannot be withdrawn at ease. Moreover, *ekub* as an organization has elected leaders that are referred to as judge, secretary and vice secretary. These officials are people who have traditional knowledge that enables them to plan the overall functioning of *ekubs*. All *ekub* have rules prescribing that members bring designated amounts of money each week/month in order to contribute to the *ita*. The names or identification numbers of members are placed in a hat or a

pan to be randomly drawn, usually by children or a blindfolded person. After the draw, the money is immediately paid to the winner. Thus, *ekub* can be considered an association that gives loans without interest. If any member has a problem, he or she can report to the judge in order to take money allotted to the *ita* without a formal draw.

The leaders have certain latitude to privately and collectively discuss needs with members and give the *ita* to a person who is facing serious problems. However, the judge cannot simply disburse the money without the consent of the general assembly. If there are enough votes to block giving the *ita* without a formal draw, the person with a problem has a chance to buy the *ita* from the one who wins it. Or, if the one who wins has also a problem, both the members with problem can share the prize. However, if leaders suspect that an individual will default or run away after taking the *ita*, they may force such a person to take it at the end of the round (Mequanent, 1994). This happens because there is a problem of enforcing *ita* rules in Toronto. One form of disciplining members is threatening them with social exclusion and informing their families back home in Ethiopia about their misconducts.

Although people do not carry much cash, *ekub* mostly functions with cash. The taxi drivers extensively utilize these informal social facilities because their job permits them to hold cash every week. Thus, the Canadian monetary habits pose a constraint on the expansion of *ekub*. If participants want to expand their *ekubs*, they will be compelled to utilize cheques than cash. The utilization of cheque transactions may modernize the structures and personalities of the *ekub*. If cheques are introduced, *ekub* leaders have to be people with competence of accounting systems in order to deal with banks. While *ekub* members vow to maintain their indigenous knowledge, the attempt to introduce the use of cheques over cash lands *ekub* in the milieu of Western knowledge – the knowledge that eventually erodes *ekub*'s originality. Most members of *ekub* are frustrated and overstressed by the constant encroachments of checking system on their traditional system. All these challenges expose them to multiple predicaments, affecting members of all ages, socioeconomic and educational levels. These pressures and the depression that often they induce become like the "common cold" for immigrants. Both depression and addiction, therefore, are factors that contribute to the overall problem of intimate partner violence (Kibour, 2006).

Mahiber, *edir* and *ekub* are coping mechanisms that bolster informal learning and exchange of ideas. This learning improves qualifications, skills and social knowledge of the community. In reality, informal learning can be accidentally imitated or deliberately designed. This informal learning is too cumbersome to distinguish and measure compared to formal programs. Nonetheless, informal learning will continue to be cherished by some sectors of the society as article of faith.

CONCLUSION

Ethiopian immigrants have come to Canada with clean heart, clear objectives and honesty, embracing Canada with both arms. However, the diffi-

culties they face, the hardships they endure and the constant struggle they encounter make them permanent pariahs and inefficient nomads. The lack of stable outlook, unreliable economic resources, an endless defence of their identity and the unholy decisions of some employers, further push these immigrants back to their roots. Consequently, these immigrants form *mahiber*, *edir* and *ekub* that enabled them to reconstruct the weakened relationships in order to promote their cultural values through the expression of primordial sentiments. Ethiopian immigrants want to stick together as much by choice as not less by force of repulsion from the mainstream society. Integration to the Canadian society has never been easy and the community is totally reeling to meet the end on a daily basis. As a result, the Ethiopian immigrants to Canada have developed the tendency of cohabiting with the mainstream society rather than integrating into it. Thus, integration can only flourish with respect, openness, acceptance, and reciprocal understanding from both sides.

Most of the Ethiopian immigrants are surely unable to deeply reconfigure the imprints of their own footsteps due to messy realities that escorted them upon arrival in Canada. Their inability was condensed into the fear of the unknown that drenched their daily lives by filling every niche and fissure of the social conditions. Sadly enough, the current Canadian social policy has transferred some of its essential obligations to market forces. These market forces have peripheralized thousands of immigrants by deliberately pushing them to sidelines as markets are the antithesis to cultural diversity. At present, therefore, the Ethiopian immigrants in Canada are desperately seeking alternative courtyards to markets where their skills and experience could be gainfully employed and sensibly utilized.

While seeking an alternative remedy to the status quo, Ethiopian immigrants have forged multiple social, community and cultural organizations that at least could enable them to endure in the fluidly-drifting Canadian social milieu. Therefore one can confidently conclude that the Ethiopian formal and informal organizations such as churches, *mahiber*, *edir* and *ekub* have served as the blood-vein of the Ethiopian immigrants' survival in Toronto.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**FRIEND, STRANGER, ENEMY
ETHIOPIAN ORAL TRADITIONS ON THE ABBAY
(BLUE NILE) RIVER**

Ebrahim Damtew¹

ABSTRACT

Ethiopians communicate to their immediate environment through various dimensions of oral traditions. Music, proverb, poetry and sayings are the cultural instruments which bring together Ethiopian societies and one of Africa's main rivers, the Abbay or Blue Nile. This paper studies the historical and cultural values that Ethiopians attribute to the Abbay River. The study is based on traditions gathered in the districts of Dembya, Fogera Libo kemkem (Addis Zemen), Farta and Estie in the Amhara National Regional State in 2013 and 2014. The study of songs and oral traditions on this river, including the local genres known as kererto, fukkera, and menzuma, as well as spiritual practices, serves to understand how local societies have identified themselves with it and embedded images of the river in the course of their daily lives. The analysis of oral traditions confirms the people's attachment to this river, their sense of identification with it, and their use of the river's might as an emblem of pride. Yet, paradoxically, oral traditions also reveal the presence of a popular feeling of resentment and disapproval towards it.

Keywords: Nile river, Abbay, proverbs, songs and sayings, Dembya.

INTRODUCTION

The river Abbay also called 'Giyon', the "father of all rivers" and a symbol of the Nation in Ethiopian tradition, is the major tributary of the Nile River (Bairu, 2000, pp. 154-156). The spring of Abbay is found in a place called Geshe Abbay (Geshe mountain), Seqela *woreda*, North Western Ethiopia, west Gojjam zone (Hailu Woldeghiorgis, 2007 A.M, p. 7). The river is believed to have over ninety tributaries in Ethiopia (Tafari, 1994, pp. 24-37). Major tributaries of the river include the Dabus, Beshilo, Didesa, Guder, Jama, Muger, Beles, Fincha, and Walaqa as well as many other smaller streams (Erlich, 2003, pp. 27-28; Tafari, 1994, p. 28). As to the sources on the drainage system of the Abbay in Ethiopia, the river and its tributaries overrun one-fifth of the total area of the country. The length of the river from its head water in Lake Tana, the largest lake in the country, to its confluence with the White Nile near to Khartoum is estimated to be 1,500 kms approximately. The Nile is also fed from other large rivers that have their springs in Ethiopia, such as the Atbara and the Sobat. It is estimated that these rivers contribute with 86% of the waters in the Nile system

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(Erllich, 2003, pp. 27-28). The figure can reach up to 95% during the rainy season in Ethiopia, from June to September. The Abbay also supplies the thickest alluvial soil taken yearly from the Ethiopian highland to the Sudanese desert. It is estimated that between 60 to 110 million tons of rich alluvial soil is transported to Sudan and Egypt annually from the Ethiopian highlands. The rich alluvial soil having been transported from Ethiopia to Egypt throughout millennia has been estimated to have reached a deposition depth of up to 9-10 m along the banks of the Nile (Hailu Woldeghiorgis, 2007 A.M., pp.11-15; Tafari, 1994, pp. 28-37).

The Abbay encounters various climatic and ecological zones in the Ethiopian region all the way to Sudan and Egypt. As it flows downstream from the upper stream basin the vegetation cover, rainfall distribution and amount of water sharply declines. Thus, the Ethiopian highlands enjoy a comfortable climate for the fauna and flora, registering approximately 1700 mm rainfall while the arid areas of Egypt have an estimated annual rainfall of 25 mm. Similarly, the evaporation rate varies dramatically between the Ethiopian region and that of the downstream countries.

To its credit, the Abbay holds the greatest respect and admiration in Ethiopian tradition with regard to other important rivers like Tekeze (Atbara), Wabishebele and Baro. In Ethiopia popular traditions assume that all rivers and streams, be they big or small, flow downstream to join the Abbay. This tradition is captured in the following poem:

ውሃ ወርዶ ወርዶ ማረፊያው አባይ
እናት ወልዳ ወልዳ ለሰው አገልጋይ
Water of all kinds flow and rest at river Abbay
A mother gives birth that goes for servitude
(informant Mulat Desie)

The first verse is an indication of the recognition given by Ethiopians for the river that accommodates all streams as a 'father' who brings together his children (see also Bairu, 2000, pp. 155-168). Even the grace and imagination given for the Abbay overshadow that of other similar big rivers. Hence, tradition has it in such a way that any flowing water is assumed to join the Abbay as its tributary. The second verse, in its turn, emphasizes that a generational duty for the man is to be born to serve his kind, a simulation which smaller rivers do for Abbay.

Paradoxically, Ethiopia has benefited little from the waters of the river (Tafari, 1994, pp. 24-45; Tesfay, 1993, pp. 1-128). A popular saying comments ironically on this fact:

የአባይን ልጅ ውሃ ጠማት
የላጭን ልጅ ቅማል በላት
Oh! the daughter of Abbay suffered in thirst,
Similarly, the daughter of a barber sucked by lice

The saying manifests Ethiopians' resentment and failure to harness the river for their own economic advantage. It expresses the feeling that the Abbay failed to serve the people with fairness and equity. Yet, for the people of the study area the river is primarily figured as a symbol of identity, pride, splendour as well as prestige. As such, Ethiopians for ages have composed songs, satirical verses, poems and folk stories and also held ritual practices in honour of the river.

THE HISTORICAL EPISODE

Throughout times, various travellers, adventurers, and scholars have striven to explore the 'mysterious' sources of the Abbay river. In their heyday of power, the Greeks and the Romans attempted to discover the sources of the Abbay. Such great political and military figures of the past like Alexander the Great showed an interest in the Abbay but were unable to find its sources. Other ambitious rulers such as Julius Cesar and Nero followed a similar purpose, but both attempts ended in failure (Bairu, 2000, p. 154; Wuhibegezer, 2016, pp. 50-57; Yewulsew, 2012, pp. 11-13). During modern times, the first European who—convincingly—claimed to have visited and documented the sources of the Blue Nile at Sekela was the Portuguese Jesuit Pedro Páez in the early seventeenth century (Páez, 2011, vol. 1, p. 244 et passim). Later on, during the age of the explorations other Europeans took an interest in the sources of the mighty river. The Scotsman James Bruce, for instance, would claim in the 1770's that he, not Páez, was the first foreigner to have visited the site (Bruce, vol. 3, p. 621 et passim; also Petros, 2010, p. 28; Yewulsew, 2012, p. 13). After him, the French Antoine Thompson d'Abbadie visited the area in 1838 (Tereje & Gedef, 2013, pp. 13-14; Yewulsew, 2012, p. 14).

For the local populations, however, there has never been the need to claim a discovery of the sources of the river. Locals have been well aware on the Abbay, which is born in their land. Yet, they were also not sure where it found its end (Getachew, 2003 A.M., p. 76; Yacob, 2007, p. 70). It is perhaps from this ambiguous status that the following popular saying, which has been passed from generation to generation, comes: አባይ ማደረጉ የለው ግንድ ይዞ ይዞራል ("Abbay the traveller, moves with debris here and there without knowing where to rest").

Ethiopians seem also to have been conscious of the benefits of the river for the wider African continent. Thus, the laureate poet Tsegaye Gebre Medhin wrote in his *Issat Woyi Ababa*:

“...It is the blood of Ethiopia,
the mother of Cush,
The introducer of civilization to the world....”
(Tsegaye Gebre Medhin translated in Yacob, 2007)

The verses can be seen as summarizing the feelings of Ethiopians for the river. Tsegaye added Abbay as the property of Africa as a whole. Probably, he was thinking of the ancient glorious past of the land of Kush and the Biblical reference to four rivers that flow out from the Garden of Eden. Gi-

yon the Biblical name given to Abbay flows in the land of Kush. In support of the poem above, the informants told that the people living along the course of the Abbay are considered the sons and daughters of the river and the offspring of Kush (*sheikh* Mohamed Aman and Worku Gessesse; also Hailu Woldeghiorgis, 2001 A.M., pp. xiv-xv).

Tsegaye also wrote on the paradoxical relationship the river has particularly in Ethiopia with poverty and climate change:

... forgotten your goodness and history,
We live in misery,
Yesterday, by outcries of aliens,
And today, by ignorant violence,
If this persists unresolved,
Your *dream about Abbay is far ...*
(Tsegaye, in Yacob translation, 2007)

Here too, the poet underlined the need to work, beyond the admiration and pride, with the Abbay for the development. The Abbay is seen as a natural and historical source of spiritual captivity. All the way from its sources in Ethiopia down to its destination in the Mediterranean, the river crosses different lands, cultures and peoples.

On the other side, however, the Abbay seems to be perceived as an enemy of the Ethiopian people. The following poem extracted from Yewulsew (2012) translated by Bayleyegn, (1998) from the work of the renowned poet Hailu Gebreyohannes *Innatkin Belulign* ('May you call his mother for me'; 1989 A.M) seems to convey this message:

If you have eyes, you, Abbay-the idle,
Please see that man, that man for a moment,
Burnt with thirst, exhausted, such like this,
For you have deserted him to go to other places.
Please see the land screaming in pain,
Yelling to receive your favour,
Begging for your mercy,
Begging you for a drop of water.
When your land cries out to tell the tale of her woes,
With her throat dried up,
So, what happened to your ears?
For they seem to be deaf to her cries.

Indeed, as already noted above the Abbay washes away the fertile topsoil of the highlands and the lowlands towards the desert. This fact has left peasants bare hand tilling the hillsides of the plateaux for centuries (Yacob, 2007, p. 74). Because of this the peasants have been unable to drive economic benefits from such a mighty river (informant Mihretie Endeshaw; Getachew, 2002, pp. 1-112).

THE NAMES OF A RIVER

Throughout history and across the cultures, the Abbay has been given several names in Ethiopia and elsewhere. In Egyptian tradition, Hapi is the name given for the Nile which has been the source of life and beauty in their land. In addition, in Egyptian civilization the river has received several epithets: “god of gods”, “god of vegetation”, “source of life”, “creator of grain”, “reason for the prosperity of Egypt” and so on. Still today the Coptic Orthodox believers in Egypt call this river Piyaro or Fiyaro. The Greeks used to call it Nilos, while modern Arabs called it Neel, which means a gift to others (Biruk, 2003 A.M., p. 52; Gebretsadik, 2003, p. 18).

Bairu Tafla, using King Ba’ede Maryam’s (1468-1478) chronicle as evidence, argues that the present name of Abbay evolved from the Ge’ez term *abbawi* (‘father’), that is ‘father of rivers’, as the river has many tributaries which can be similar with the children gathered by their father (2000, p. 168; see also Hailu Woldegiorgis, 2007 A.M., p. xiv). Haggai Erlich described Abbay as an Ethiopian name for the Blue Nile. For him “the name Abbay revolved mainly around the myth that by controlling the river Ethiopia could deprive Egypt of its life blood” (Erlich, 2003, pp. 27-28).

The Abbay river in the study area context is associated with traditions that go back several generations in time. Thus, the name Gesh Abbay, where the spring of Abbay is found, is derived from the local language and people who historically inhabited the area. Traditions ascribe this name to the Awi (Agaw) meaning “digging or dig”, paving the way for flowing water (Abebe Fentahun, 2012, p. 12). Foreign travellers did not enquire into the origin of the term Abbay, but they confirmed that the local residents were Agaw language speakers (Tereje and Gedef, 2013, pp. 13-17). Another tradition on the name Abbay associates it with the hagiographic lore of the Christian orthodox religion. It begins with the experience of a certain *abun* Zera Biruk. The holy man once upon a time stored seven sacred religious books in the waters at the source of the river and left the area for another place. After seven years the *abun* returned and prayed to bring out the holy books from the water. The holy books were found without any sign of damage. The pleased *abun* asked his old disciple *abba* Zerufael to look at the miracle, saying him: *abba iyi yihinin gedil* “look father, look this miracle”. So it was after this miracle that the Amharic term Abbay was coined. Alternatively the Abbay is also known by its Biblical name Giyon.

In both Christian and Muslim traditions Giyon, together with Euphrates, Tigris, and Epheson, is one of the four blessed rivers that flow from paradise (Bairu, 2000, p. 167; Yewulsew 2012; informants *sheikh* Mohamed Aman, *hajji* Abdela Osman and Zemzem Yassin). The Abbay is personified and deeply inculcated in the minds of the Ethiopian society and it is a syncretistic element in the culture and world view of the people (informant Yeneta Teshome Mulatu and Eshite Ahmed). The Abbay denotes greatness, strength and splendour. In Ge’ez language the word Abbay can also be related to the term big or great (*memhir* Sitotaw Tafla as cited in Yacob, 2007, p. 78; informant Abbaynesh Alemu).

People also named their children after the Abbay. Thus, common names given to children in north and central Ethiopia are Abbayneh ('you are Abbay' for male) and Abbaynesh ('you are Abbay' for female). These usages shows the people's respect for the river and their will to see themselves as part of it. It is also common to see such names even in the northern provinces (see Bairu, 2000, p. 155) In Dara *woreda*, South Gondar Zone, a local resident, *ato* Merasha Desalew, summarized in these words the people's association with the river:

አባይነህ/ ሽ / ብለን ስም ስናወጣ ዝምብለን አይደለም አባይ የፈጣሪ ረድኤት በመሬት ላይ የምናየው ስለሆነ በእርሱ መመሰል ኩራት ነው። ቢያመን ፀበሉን እንጠጣለን እንሸራለን ረድኤቱ አያልቅበትም ይህንን ለመዘከርና ለክብሩ በስሙ እንምላለን ስለትም ለአባይ አምላክ እናስገባለን ሃሳባችንም ይፈፀማል።አባይ ውሃ ብቻ ሳይሆን ሃይማኖታችንም ነው።አባይ የጀግናመዋያም ነው ። አባይ ገባ ከተባለ ማንም ሰው አይነካውም

We are not ignorant when we give names to our children as Abbay for a male and Abbaynesh for a female. It is our tribute to the river, for being named after it is a spell of pride and glory. Lest we are sick, we drink the water and we are healed. We swear after the Abbay, sacrifice in the name of God that created it. It is not a mundane value in the water of it that we value. It is our religion. Once you are religious, once you join the plains of the Abbay, it means that you have a strong fence against your enemies (informant Merasha Desalew).

CHANTS ON THE ABBAY

Given the Ethiopians' strong attachment to the Abbay, it is not surprising that popular imagination has this river as a privileged subject of the country's rich lore of songs, poems and chants. Ethiopians have a strong tradition of composing verses for various social, political, economic and cultural circumstances (informant Teshome Yimam; Hailu Woldeghiorgis, 2001 A.M.; Levine, 1965). The Ethiopians' songs, poems and chants associate the river with different values, topics and situations. The following pieces of oral poetry were collected during different field research carried out in 2013 and 2014 in the districts of Dembya, Este and Fogera, and South Gondar Zone. The interviewees were chosen among the *shemagle* group ('elders'), both female and male. The interview method was that of 'snowball' interview and the questions unfolded according to the disposition, interest and knowledge of the interviewees. It bears mention that in general interviewees were cooperative and eager to share their art and knowledge on the Abbay as this is not a politically-tainted topic.

Poems conveying pride, respect and hope

The poems and songs related to hope, respect and prestige associated with the river are numerous. Below follows a selection of Amharic couplets collected from different areas of North Gondar and South Gondar Zones:

Couplet 1

አባይ ጉደል ጉደል አይባ ሙላሙላ

የከፋው ወንድ ልጅ ተሻግሮ እንዲበላ
Please, Abbay may you empty your water, but Ayiba
A resented brave man has to cross your gorge to make a living.

Couplet 2

አባይ ስደተኛ አባይ የከፋው ሰው
ባልንጀራ ሁነው መጣልህ ይኸ ሰው
Yeah Abbay, you migrant, you the dissident,
be friend to the dissident man coming for you.

Couplet 3

ቢገድልም ገደለ ባይገድልም ገደለ
አባይ ከበረሀው ብቻውን የዋለ
Whether he killed or he did not kill,
he, who spends the day [lives, resides] alone in the lowlands of the
Abbay.

Couplet 4

ኢትዮጵያ ሀገራችን ወንዞችን አባይ
ሴቱ ቀጭን ፈታይ ወንዱ ተጋዳይ
Ethiopia is our country, Abbay is our river,
the women are fine spinners [and] the men are brave warriors.

Couplet 5

ታረባ ዓደኛ ይሻላል አባይ ይሻላል ተከዜ
በየት እንሻገር ያሰኛል ሁል ጊዜ
It is better to trust Abbay and Tekeze as friends than someone,
they always help to see other ways to cross.

Couplet 6

አባይን አረሱት ዘቅዝቀው በይ ለበይ
አባትየው ቢሞት ልጅየው የለምወይ
They tilled the Abbay upside down
Isn't the son alive if the father dies?

Couplet 7

በሰማይ ገነቱን ከምትመኝው
ያባይን ልጅ ወደሽ አለምሽን እይው
Rather than dreaming his paradise in the sky
Taste heaven falling in love with the son of Abbay

Couplet 8

ኧረ አባይ ንጉሱ ኧረ አባይ ንጉሱ
አንተን በታች አርገው በላይገሰገሱ
Oh! Abbay the king!, Oh! Abbay the king!
Putting you under (below) [...] they marched above you
(informants Bekele Beshah, Kebede Mersha and Mersha Desalew)

In the above verses several themes are treated. We can infer that the people in the study areas associated bravery with the river Abbay in their day to day world view. But the river is also the source of charisma and prestige. Even people who knew it from hearing from the distance were amazed by its glory and always dream of visiting it. This seems the meaning conveyed in the proverb አባይን ያላየ ቀረ እንደ ተሰየ ("He, who failed to see Abbay suffered in an imaginary longing").

We can also understand the extent of the influence of Abbay for the identity formation of the local people. Local societies perform music such as heroic recitals that intertwine with the mighty Abbay. Thus, couplets 1-6 convey similar messages with slight difference associated with the Abbay. They refer to the generosity and honour that throughout times the public have attributed to the Abbay. The river, for instance, appears personified as a hero or heroine. In Couplet 1 the epithet used is የከፋው ወንድ ልጅ ('the disappointed boy') while Couplet 2 speaks of አባይ ስደተኛ አባይ የከፋው ሰው ('Abbay the migrant, Abbay the sad person'); the latter verse capitalizes on the sadness for the Abbay since it deserted to Egypt and Sudan, becoming thus a 'migrant' river. Other terms also elaborate on the public attachment with the Abbay. One sees the Abbay as a symbol of national pride of Ethiopia, as it can be seen in Couplet 2. Couplet 3 in turn attributes blood feuding as one of the dominant traditions in the study area: ባይገድልም ገደለ ('even though he doesn't kill he becomes a killer'). The meaning is that if you kill anyone it will not be socially sanctioned but if you kill with a noble purpose it will be seen even as a honourable act. Indeed, Abbay has been traditionally the shelter of such 'heroes' (informants Kebede Merasha, Bekele Beshah and Merasha Desalew).

Couplet 5 deals with the dependable partnership with the Abbay valley for people discontent with their home society or community. It also underlines the presence of friends with lesser value that may not keep secrets. The verse figures the river Abbay as the best choice for friendship, particularly for banditry. So, the public owes allegiance and respect to the Abbay and to its valley for the protection they offer. In Couplet 6 the verse አባትየው ቢሞት ልጅየው የለም ወይ ('Isn't the boy alive when the father dies') tells of the importance of descent in order to defend the family interests with the father. This tradition is clearly associated with Abbay as it is the natural home of heroes and heroines.

Couplets 7 and 8 speak of the mightiness of the Abbay. The first one compares life along the banks of Abbay to life in heaven. It narrates that the Abbay represents local people who are hospitable and peaceful for friends. We can also infer there the idea that the Abbay is seen as the source of hope that alleviates scarcity with happiness (አለምሽን እይው, "Enjoy your life"). But the river seems also to be perceived as a medium to alleviate personal frustrations, such as a non corresponded love. Couplet 8 chants the grandness of the river but pointing out that this has dismissed since the bridges crossing it were built (from the early twentieth century onwards), so today people are able to cross it on foot or by using a modern transportation system. Thus, Abbay the bountiful remains beneath while the public fly over it.

The poem could have been first composed following the construction of the great bridge in the 1950s (informants Kebede Meshesha, Bekele Beshah and Mersha Desalew).

As indicated above, the lowlands of the Abbay have been traditionally the shelter for *shifta*, i.e. bandits or rebels. Popular poems have also reflected on this issue:

Couplet 9

ሳጋ አይባ ዱራዱሩ
የቸገረንለታ መጠጊያችን ስሩ
Oh! Saga and Ayiba the bush and the grass
Build the shelter in times of difficulty
(informants Teshome Yimam and Ahmed Mohamed)

Couplet 10

መነጠሩት አሉ አባይ ዱራዱሩን
ካረባባ ጎበዝ የሚሻለውን
The banks of Abbay are deforested
Which for ages were used as shelter for local heroes
(informant Mulat Desie)

Couplet 11

አባይ ገመገሙ ታየኝ ወዳ ማይ
የሚሻገርበት ወንድ ልጅ ተናይ
Yeah! Yonder I see the cliff of the Abbay
Where heroes would cross at times of anger
(informant Teshome Yimam)

Couplet 9 capitalizes on the sense of familyhood the public has with regards to the Abbay and its smaller tributaries the Saga and the Ayiba, both in the Begemdir regions of Estie and Farta. These areas have been important for the public livelihood and shelter during the times of trouble when *shiftinat* (banditry) thrived. Individuals in trouble or crisis due to various reasons migrated to the valleys of the mentioned rivers and found there their own ways of subsistence. The popular saying ስትዋረድ፣ አባይውረድ ("when defame, go and join Abbay") could be also recalled here.

Couplet 10 expresses the environmental degradation widely prevalent along the lowland areas of the Abbay in the last one hundred years due to population pressure vis-à-vis the quest for farmland. In some aspects of Ethiopian history, banditry was part of the political experiences of several political leaders who later ended up bearing the title of king of kings (*niguse negest*). Thus, such emperors as Susinyos, Tewodros II and Yohannis IV famously started their political career as *shifta*. Dissidents of the court also tended to establish secessionist military desperado in an attempt to show their refusal as well as to overthrow the established system. In the past the *shifta*'s strategy was to put pressure on his/her opponents in order to negotiate a better position in land holding or power. Thus, banditry can be the source of social mobility and capital (informant Teshome Yimam; Teshale,

1995, p. 71). It is in this sense that the second verse of Couplet 10 attributes a prestigious position for Abbay as the home of bandits in its bushes and valleys. Indeed, the Abbay as a shelter has long been chosen as a favourite haven for banditry life. The river was thus also feared and respected since it hosted the angry, 'rebel' segments of the society.

Similarly, Couplet 11 also expresses the view of an individual who was mistreated by his countrymen and decided to leave his locality. He inaugurated his final decision to join the Abbay or just to go to other areas crossing the Abbay valley. According to informants, during the old days someone who had a blood feud in Mota, East Gojjam, could choose to cross the Abbay and thus live in peace without fear, thanks to the shelter provided by the river.

The rituals and beliefs associated with the river Abbay have been described by western travellers and explorers. According to Terje and Gedef (2013, pp. 1-30) water plays an indispensable role in religious practices of the study area along Lake Tana, both for the Christian and Muslim communities. It is thus popularly believed that the river has possessed healing powers for millennia. Couplet 12 emphasizes such traditions. My informants at Mekane Iyesus, in Andabet, Estie *woreda* told me that there is a *tsebel* (holy water spring) that is believed to reach down to the Abbay. The holy water is used for healings of various illnesses such as deafness and other diseases.

Couplet 12

የአባይን ውሃ ተጎንብሶ ጠጣው

ህመሜን ፈውሶኝ ብሎም ተማፀነው

He drunk the water of Abbay being bowed

They believed in him, as the water heals my illness

(informant Mihretie Endeshaw)

Concerning the healing powers of the river, one of my key informants, *azmari* Berie, who was around the banks of the Abbay fifteen years ago, shared with me an interesting story. He said that a certain person once argued against the popular belief saying that the Abbay had no powers to cure and that it was a river like any other. He further added: "If Abbay has the power to do wrong on myself, let me wash my face with the water of Abbay." Having said this, the person walked towards the river and washed his hand and his face. Immediately when he turned his face his eyes became blind and in consequence he lost his sight. *Azmari* Berie keeps chanting about his incredulity at such experience (informants Mihrtie Endeshaw, Berie Fule, MuluWorku and Ahmed Mohamed).

Concerning the same issue, Getachew further wrote:

Abbay or Giyon is a belief [for the locals]. It is believed that its outflow starts from the Garden of Eden like the other three rivers, namely, Euphrates, Tigris and Ephison and it has a holy name and holy water. There are so many who wish to be healed from disease, poverty, and other misfortunes. Abbay is their *adbar* and their *qolle* (2002, p. 75).

We can relate these popular beliefs on the Abbay's healing powers with the rich lore of Greek mythology (Yacob, 2007). Thus, Yacob cited passages from Greek mythology referring to the healing power attributed in ancient times to the Abbay or Blue Nile and to the land of Ethiopia. Prometheus sent to the distant Ethiopia, Abbay Io, a princess who had fallen sick, to restore her into a beautiful human creature. He sent her with the following advice: please, know this you should go to Ethiopia where the Nile water flows. The Nile water works wonders to end your misery. Go and wash your body there. It will be extremely good and have a miraculous effect. The princess travelled to Ethiopia and was healed by the action of the river. She felt happy and honoured and later gave birth to the greatest of all heroes, Hercules. The restoration of Io's health and sanity expresses the redeeming powers of the Ethiopian Nile.

Poems of disappointment

As opposed to the glorification commonly shown by Ethiopian poets towards the Abbay, the imagination of Ethiopian peasantry has also expressed its resentment for the misery and cruelty the river shows for its people and region of origin. As it was discussed above, the river erodes fertile plateaus and deposits rich alluvial soils to the arid environments of Sudan and Egypt at the expense of the local peasantry. Several satirical and condemnatory verses have thus been composed and transmitted throughout times accusing, sometimes even defaming the river:

Couplet 13

አባይ በጣና ላይ ቀለደበት ከቶ
መሄጃ አደረገው ላንድ ቀን ነው ብሎ
Abbay is joking over Tana
Reduced it to a cross line promising it for a day

Couplet 14

አባይናጣና ተጣልተው በድንበር
አባይ ተሸንፎ ሲያጉረመርም ነበር
Abbay and Tana quarrelled over a boundary
Meanwhile Abbay lost in the battle, that is why it roars loudly (angrily)

Couplet 15

አባይ ንፋስ መሳይ
መሄድህን እንጅ መውሰድህን አታይ
Abbay! You are like the wind,
You care only for your journey, and not what you take away

Couplet 16

አባይ ለኢትዮጵያ ምን አድርጎላታል
አፈሯን ውጭ ነገር ወስዶ ደልድሎታል
What after all Abbay did for Ethiopia?
It takes her soil and brings it abroad
(informants Berie Fulie, Destaw Mersha, and Abebe Ayele)

Couplet 17

አባይ በጣና ላይ ሲሔድ ባይኔ አይቸው
ሰው ለሰው አያዝንም ጊዜ ከተመቸው
I see that Abbay is travelling over Tana
If time allows to do so man may act dishonestly for another
(informants Worku Gessess and Mihirete Wubie)

The verses above articulate the deep-rooted resentment against Abbay, a river that is seen as failing to serve its country of origin. Couplets 13, 14 and 17 refer to the strong relationship between the river Abbay and Lake Tana. Accordingly, people blame Abbay for not respecting Tana, its main water source. The second line of Couplet 17 also draws from Abbay's 'treacherous' nature and ponders on the unpredictable nature of man.

Couplets 15 and 16 deal with issues of dispossession. Thus, Abbay does not travel alone in his journey away from Ethiopia but it takes along the fertile soil and water of the highlands to the desert. Both verses seem to resent this fact and recur to strong words: መውሰድህን አታይ ("you haven't imagined what you take") and አፈሯን ውጭሃገረ ("her soil taken to a foreign land").

Couplet 18

አባይ አልሰማም ወይ ሚሌ፣በሽሎ የሰራውን
ወስደው ያንን ዛፍ አብሮት የኖረውን
O Abbay haven't you heard what Millie and Beshilo did
May I tell you the news, they washed away the oldest tree you lived for
long with

Couplet 19

አባይና ጣና አንድ ላይ ሲኖሩ
አይነገገሩም ጉድ በሉ ጉድ በሉ
The Abbay and Tana live side by side
You may wonder, both don't talk to each other!
(informants Kamal Mustefa and Beyan Gebeyaw)

In Couplet 18 the message is controversial and satirical. Why to bother with Abbay? Abbay is the father of Beshilo and Milie (this one is actually a tributary to the Awash river) and is highly involved in eroding many hill-sides of the highlands.

Islamic religious songs have showed their recognition and mightiness of Abbay as an *awliya* ('father') to honour the role of elders in the society to mediate injustice. Couplet 19 is taken from such a tradition, belonging to the *menzuma* literary genre. My informants, who performed in my presence, told me about the secrets of God in the waters of Abbay and Tana. The two waters are not dissolved each other particularly in the rainy season. Such insight is represented by the second verse, አይነገገሩም ጉድ በሉ ጉድ በሉ ("Surprisingly, never have they talked each other", i.e. they are together but they don't have communication). It might have the meaning that Abbay has

been flowing down to other lands but Tana remains loyal to its origin. The verse thus seems to blame Abbay (informants Kamal Mustefa and Beyan Gebeyaw).

To substantiate the above popular explanations, we may refer to the following poem:

Abbay went out of sight,
While there are many natives at home
It took all of our produce from our field
The teff, wheat barley and millet,
The beans, peas and the chickpeas
The oranges, mangoes and lemons from our garden,
to give it to the Egyptians.
(Tadele, 1993 A.M., cited in Yewulsew, 2012)

Abbay has been of little use in Ethiopia and conversely it was, and still is, a source of life for others. As such the river has been ridiculed as evil and further insulted and criticized (Ayele, 2003, pp. 62-63).

CONCLUSIONS

In this study an attempt has been made to present and analyze the message conveyed through poems belonging to the rich oral traditions collected and selected from the Ethiopian highlands. These poems, including *fuk-ker*, *gererto*, war chants, Muslim *menzuma*, are used by the local people in their day to day life in association with the river Abbay. The society in the study area has old traditions of composing poems and proverbs to address feelings towards their environment. Culturally the poems witness to the deep-rooted creativity and advanced curiosity and intellect of the peasants and the way they educate each other using such traditions. Traditions on the river Abbay are strong parts in the literary culture of the people of the study areas.

The research shows that the lives of the local societies and the river Abbay have been interwoven for ages. In the analysis two issues have emerged. One is the reverence with which the river Abbay is held by locals, who describe it with an aura of glorification, pride and respect. The other is a more critical attitude of the local societies towards the Abbay. Local traditions indeed reveal grievances and bitter-loaded views ascribed to the river. In summary, the people living along its banks and beyond have deep-rooted cultural and historical attachment to the river. Public views are full of passion towards the Abbay river, which is perceived as it belongs to the people. Locals praise it at times and other times they criticize it not as outsiders but almost as the river's relatives. A curse and a gift, the Abbay has been part of the societies' imagination before and after the introduction of the monotheistic religions. Naturally, it has also been subsumed into the big narratives of the Bible and in the Qur'an. Studying such traditions can help us to understand the psychological makeup and identity formation of the societies residing in the lowlands and highlands crossed by the Abbay and their sense of belongingness towards the river.

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LIST OF INFORMANTS

Name	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remarks
Abebe Ayele (<i>ato</i>)	55	12/ 11/2013	Woreta	A religious father, well informed of traditions related to Abbay and its tributaries.
(<i>Sheikh</i>) Abdela Yesuf	67	3/10/2014	Debre Tabor	A Muslim cleric originally from Wallo well informed of <i>Menzuma</i> tradition in Wallo and Gondar. He shared his deep knowledge on Islam and <i>had-dith</i> in association to <i>Menzuma</i> Islamic religious song. He has also shared his view on <i>awliya</i> in general.
Abateneh Abitie (<i>ato</i>)	63	13/10/ 2014	Birbuax	He is knowledgeable in analyzing traditions related to Abbay river. He gave data with detail explanations on that.
Abbaynesh Alemu (<i>woyzero</i>)	65	23/1/2014	Debre Tabor	An informed housewife who shared her experience on Abbay river
Ahmed Mu- hamed (<i>ato</i>)	70	3/1/2014	Addis Zemen	A merchant who shared his knowledge of traditions on Abbay river and the people he has grown up
Aweke Guadu (<i>ato</i>)	72	4/12/2013	Andabet	A farmer with personal experience in the valley of river Abbay and river Ayiba. He shared his traditional knowledge on the river.

Name	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remarks
Bekele Beshah (<i>ato</i>)	63	2/3/2014	Hamusit	A merchant well informed between river Abbay and the surrounding people. He is a native of Hamusit and Ambasame, South Gondar.
Berie Fulie (<i>azmari</i>)	68	2/4/2014 2/3/2014	Gondar	An <i>azmari</i> and a knowledgeable person who shared his experience on the spiritual power of Abbay river.
Beyan Gebeyaw (<i>ato</i>)	58	5/2/2014 3/4/2014	Chuahit (Dembya)	A weaver with tremendous capability in his-toricizing traditions.
Kebede Mersha (<i>ato</i>)	47	6/4/2014	Aykel	A farmer in Gelediba, who informed about public perception towards Abbay
Kemal Mustofa (<i>ato</i>)	85	7/5/2014	Aykel	A weaver and a merchant who shared his knowledge of menzuma / Islamic religious chanting/ and river Abbay.
Mersha Desta (<i>ato</i>)	67	2/12/2013	Nifas Mewucha	A retired teacher well informed of culture and history from the land of historic Begemdir.
Mihretie Endeshaw (<i>ato</i>)	78	3/11/2013	Koladiba	A farmer and former member of Derg committee in his locality.
Mihiretie Wubie (<i>ato</i>)	86	13/4/2013	Aykel	A member of the imperial army, originally from Gojjam and well informed of the traditions related to Abbay.
Mohammed Aman (<i>sheikh</i>)	82	8/6/2014	Gondar	A merchant well informed of religious traditions on the Abbay river.
Mulat Desie (<i>ato</i>)	48	5/3/2014	Debre Tabor	A farmer with critical traditional knowledge on the river Abbay
Mulu Worku (<i>woyzero</i>)	60	9/8/2014	Gondar	A housewife well informed of river Abbay.
<i>Sheikh</i> Nuru Ahmed	57	10/5/204	Aykel	A native of Chilga and well informed of Islamic tradition in Gondar along the historical trade route dominated by Muslim merchants called <i>Jabarti</i> . He shared his experience on Islam in the region.
Teshome Yimam (<i>ato</i>)	70	2/9/2013	Nifas Mewcha	A farmer who shared his knowledge on Abbay.

Name	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remarks
Worku Gessesse (ato)	89	2/3/2014	Birhala (Dembya)	A veteran of the Italian time, knowledgeable on cultural issues, native to Dembya and Seqelt.
Zelalem Asfaw (ato)	65	3/2/2014	Addis Zemen	A merchant who shared his father's memories on the Abbay.
Zemzem Yassin (woyzero)	69	4/5/2014	Enfranz	A merchant with greater knowledge of Abbay river and other traditions of the area.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

**“TRADITIONAL” CULTURAL HERITAGE
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN CHURCH PROPERTY:
THE CASE OF DEBRE MEDAHNIT DEKWA
KIDANEMIHRET, ETHIOPIA**

Marshet Girmay¹

ABSTRACT

Ethiopian monasteries and churches are home to substantial material culture, storing frontiers of knowledge from the sacred to the secular. Debre Medahnit Dekwa Kidanemihret, located in Dabat woreda, is the repository of a number of cultural heritages, with significant historical values. However, some of these heritages are in a critical state of preservation. Hence, concerns emerge on the existing cultural heritage management practice in the study area, as preservation of the landscape is an urgent obvious task. This paper investigates the ‘traditional’ cultural heritage management practices of the church. The paper focuses on practices of local and scientific cultural heritage conservation. The data for the study are primary sources, such as letters and reports, found in archives in Gondar town as well as oral information. The study found that a combination of indigenous knowledge and faith conservation was the existing heritage conservation practice. It is recommended that these traditional methods and native intervention should be appreciated with a further attempt to integrate them into scientific cultural heritage management practices.

Keywords: cultural heritage management, indigenous knowledge, monasteries, Dekwa Kidanemihret, Dabat

INTRODUCTION

History is comprised of many layers of accumulated collective memory. Human societies have created enormous heritages associated to their religious beliefs and practices. The human acknowledgement of the sacred character of the surrounding natural world has been an important part in human civilization (Sergew, 1972, p. 372). Religious values are present in all the human families; they govern many societies’ lives, from the cradle to the grave, providing a defining link between the individual and the universe. In many societies, this heritage concentrates on most of the arts and skills (Wright, 1957, p. 76). As such, it constitutes a major document and a unique witness to the human endeavour and its achievements (Ibid; also, ICOMOS, 2010).

The heritage of Ethiopia is undeniably rich and largely diversified as several civilizations have prospered in the country. The richness of the heritage in

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Ethiopia is represented in many ways both in the religious world and in its secular life (Wright, 1957, p. 52). The heritage places linked to religious practices are numerous and greatly diversified. This heritage comprises of individual or groups of buildings, sites as well as vast and complex areas such as holy cities, sacred landscapes (including those formed by ancient place names) and pilgrimage routes, all of these being the type of “monuments and sites”. Religious objects, archives and documents as well as the rites, rituals and traditions are invaluable religious heritages (National Archive of India, 1993). These heritages reflect the religious practices with which they are associated.

Owing to their significance for the local community, as well as due to their artistic, historical, anthropological importance, it comes as no surprise that religious buildings and/or sites make up a considerable part of national or local heritage lists (Pankhurst, 1968, p. 112). This situation is echoed in the World Heritage list which includes over one hundred sites listed under an explicit religious reference, mainly temples, churches, monasteries and/or sacred mountains. In addition, a great majority of the cultural or mixed sites on the list cover territories which include sacred places as in the case of historic towns or cultural landscapes (Tunprawat, 2009, p. 341).

In many countries, cultural heritage legislation concerning the management includes specific clauses related to religious properties (Gasiorowski, 1981, p. 4). Besides these legal specificities, the question of religious heritage offers opportunities to develop conservation guidelines and management tools. As far as religious cultural heritage is concerned, Ethiopia occupies a unique place among the Sub-Saharan African countries for having evolved its own language and literature (Pankhurst, 1968 p. 286). The tradition of documenting classical achievements in its own language was as remarkable as the development of its own language. Large numbers of Ge'ez works have emerged since at least the 5th century A.D. Since then, it became the primary responsibility of religious scholars to prepare writing materials locally. These scholars did their best in documenting the multilayered history of Ethiopia (Ibid). As history witnesses, countless heritages have already been eroded away due to incursion with modernization. Documentary heritages have been the target of looters during the years of national and local crisis of Ethiopia (Melaku, 1994, p.10).

The collective memory of any society is of vital importance in preserving cultural identities, in bridging the past and the present and in shaping the future. The documentary heritage maintained in some homes, libraries, palaces and archives constitute a major part of that memory and reflect the diversity of arts, languages and cultures of that society (Pankhurst, 1968, p. 112). But, that memory is fragile. The question remains: How much of that memory is being promoted and preserved by their custodians? Heritage of any kind is an important part of social, cultural and educational history of every nation. Traditionally, the mission of the custodians and their archives is to preserve written knowledge and cultural treasures, to collect present day information and disseminate it for future needs. However, there is still much to be desired in the attitude of those who are supposed to be the custodians of the cultural heritage in the area of promotion

and preservation for they have failed to do so in the Ethiopian context. Yet, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has proven fairly effective in protecting its treasures in spite of the fact that the management system is traditional and exclusory (Spencer, 1967, p. 56).

Despite the plethora of literature, a great number of the studies on heritage fail to provide an in-depth analysis of the management and preservation practices of religious heritages. *Debre Medahnit Dekwa Kidanemihret* located in Dabat woreda which hosts rich documentary heritage, is given lesser attention by the academic scholars, who are mainly historians and/or heritage professionals. Issues such as: what are the practices of heritage management in the church? How did the church leaders manage to preserve safely so many heritages in the church over the years? What are the unique techniques used? The manner in which the church officials should participate, the balance between varying and sometimes conflicting interests of the secular heritage authorities and the church are often disregarded. My intention here was to investigate the indigenous heritage management practice implemented in the *Debre Medahnit Dekwa Kidanemihret*.² The current status of those historical and cultural objects has been evaluated based on the conservation and management principles that take many aspects into account and require a wide range of professional skills.

For the study I collected written and oral data. On the one hand, I looked at the documents from the office of the North Gondar Zone Diocese situated in Gondar and from the Begemdir Governorate General Archival centre located in the same town (today North Gondar Zone Administration Historical Archives, NGZAHA), as well as at the proclamations on heritage conservation and preservation. On the other hand, in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviewees included religious officials from the *Debre Medahnit Dekwa Kidanemihret* and Gondar, the custodians of the church properties at Dekwa Kidanemihret and some informants from Woken *kebele* and Dabat town. In addition, in January 2016 a field visit to the church was conducted to examine the status of religious heritage found in the *Debr*. The visit counted with the support of North Gondar Zone Mahbere Kiddusan³ branch and the Diocese offices. The data collected were analyzed by using categorizing strategies (thematic analysis) and connecting narrative strategies (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96).

THE ORIGINS OF DEBRE MEDAHNIT DEKWA KIDANEMIHRET

Dekwa Kidanemihret is found about 90 kms far to the northeast of the historic city of Gondar and some 15 kms from Dabat town. It was established

² *Kidane Mihret* is a Ge'ez phrase which literally means 'covenant of mercy'. The phrase is used to refer to God's promise to St. Mary that he would forgive the sins of those who seek her intercession. Kidane Mihret also refers to Yekatit 16 (February 23), the day on which St. Mary received the promise. It is also observed on the 16th day of each month though not as colourfully as on February 23. The day marks one of the 33 feasts of St Mary.

³ Mahbere Kiddusan is a religious association established in 1991 under the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church with a license from the *Sinodos* (the highest administrative council in the Church).

by *atse* Adyam Seged Iyasu (Iyasu I), a Gondarine king who ruled from 1682-1706. The king was one of the most religiously ambitious rulers. He was also a very active ruler, who travelled continuously to different parts of the region leading military expeditions. On his way to the north to subdue the northern rivals, he spent some time in Dekwa, a village recently in Dabat town. According to the Ethiopian medieval tradition, during campaigns the kings used to be accompanied by a group of clergy who carried the *tabots*⁴ the king had a strong reverence to (Budge, 2000, p. 12). So, in the case of the battle of Adwa the clergy accompanied the king carrying the *tabot* of the church of St. George. Indeed, many Ethiopians credit the formidable victory of Adwa in 1896 to the intervention of St. George. In the royal chronicles of the Gondarine emperors the same phenomenon is recounted. When Iyasu's father, Emperor Yohannis I, embarked on a military expedition, 'before him went the *tabot* of Our Lady Maryam Siyon of Gimja Bet, and the image of Our Lord Jesus Christ called *Kwe'erata Re'esu...*' Later, too, in Emperor Iyasu II's time, a chronicle mentions the clergy of '*tabota tseyon* (the *tabot* of Zion), which is Gemja Bet' (informant *kesis Alemayehu*; see also Dereje, 1999, p. 89; Munro-Hay, 2005, p. 43).

As it was often the case, when *atse* Adyam Seged Iyasu went to Dekwa he was accompanied by the *tabot* of *Sheinu* Kidanemihret that he brought from Shewa. After their brief stay at Dekwa, the priest who carried the *tabot* was unable to move away despite the king's order. According to one of the informants in the study area, the King himself was a *deacon* and was forced to make liturgical and other religious services in a group of only three but in vain. After a long attempt to do so the king had a discussion with the local community about what happened for the last three days. The King said to the people to take care of the *tabot* so long as he would be back. One of the informants interestingly noted that they replied as “ንጉሥ ያልቻላትን እኛ እንዴት እንችላለን”, which literally means “How we the ordinary people do what the king could not manage to do so.” Rather, the local community suggested:

“እኛ አይሆንልንም፤ የሚ ችል ከሆነና እግዚአብሔር ከፈቀደልዎት ከዚህ ጫ ካ ውስጥ አንድ የበቁ አባት አሉ ስማ ቸውም አባ ሆር ይባላል ለርሳቸው ይስጧ ቸው” Which meant, “We cannot do that rather if he can and if it is the will of God there is a man called *abba* Hor living in the nearby jungle, who is “righteous” and deserved to look after the ark on loan” (informant *qes Aklilu Desse*; informant *Melake Mihret* Adane Abate). This man was living alone dedicating his entire life to the Almighty God and was out of the sight of the ordinary people. The king accepted and did accordingly. Then, the king with his guard moved to the place silently⁵ where he was located and made hands clap three times mildly. *Abba* Hor came out from his place and talked to the king. The king

4. The *tabot* is popularly envisaged nowadays as a replica or representation of the Ark of the Covenant—or, perhaps, more strictly, of the tablets of the Law—at Aksum. This sort of symbolism means that there are many thousands of ‘Arks of the Covenant’ in Ethiopia today, since every church has at least one *tabot*; Munro-Hay, 2005, pp. 43-44.

5. The tradition in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one should move voicelessly in and around the monastery not to disturb people inside since it is the place for praying.

told everything that happened in the last three days. Eventually, *abba* Hor accepted the proposal and carried the tabot, and departed soon.

Tradition says that when the king was back triumphantly from a campaign in the north after three years, around Messewa, he found that *abba* Hor had died but kept the ark without any damage (informant *melake mihret aba* Mulu Shitaneh). The king could not believe it. In their attempt to separate the ark from the dead body, the body crumbled into pieces. From this moment on the name *dekwa*, literally meaning ‘fall to pieces’, was given to the place (informant *qes* Fente Teshome). The king was so overwhelmed and dwelled by what happened at this place that he took on to establish a church for the ark of Kidanemihret (Anfray, 1988-89, pp. 11-12). After accomplishing the construction the king acclaimed the church that “ጤ ህገ, ገነት ዳሯ ሰት”, which literally means “the inner part is paradise and the outer part is like fire”. According to the informants, if a man who killed another found refuge in the church he would be free and no one could offend him. The mercy is given because he is found in the inner part of the church referred as a place of peace.

Ato Mamo Getahun is a popular professional in maintaining Gondarine buildings by using lime stone and other local materials. He has made maintenance in the Fasil Castle, the Fasil bath and now Dekwa Kidanemihret. According to *abba* Mulu Shitaneh, the first man who was entitled to administer the church was *abba* Faga and *aleqa* Sebhat was one of the administrators of the church but from Ledeta Mariam, Gondar. By now, it is *Melake Mihret* Adane Abate (one of the potential informants of this work) who is in charge of administering the church.

Iyasu I fully sponsored the construction of Dekwa Kidanemihret and employed seventy seven *debtera* and other religious men in order for the church to offer uninterrupted service. Land grant was common for those who served the church in different ways (informants *qes* Fente Teshome, *qes* Aklilu Desse; see also, Crummey, 2011, p. 101; Shumet, 1984, p. 88). Since at the time there was no fixed salary or daily payment, land was the only means to secure a living. *Debre Medahnit* Dekwa Kidanemihret had given 25 *rim* from the king located in Tenseye, Dekwa, Anora, Mereba, Janora meda and the surrounding (informant *Melake Mihret aba* Mulu Shitaneh). This *rim* land was a kind of *gult* right vested to the church. Even though, most scholars consider *gult* to be a right to land, it had also been characterized as a right to control the manpower of the peasants living on the land (Hobe, 1973, p. 5). *Gult* rights were not actually inheritable in the study church or not necessarily hereditary (informant *qes* Mihret Wolde Mariam; Pauseng, 1983, p. 17). The land was given to the church but distributed to its servants who transferred some portions of the produce to the

6. *Debtera* is a general term given to all those who have completed school of the church. It also refers to the educated lay clergy in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church who are employed to prepare amulets (little leather cases containing magical prayers and formulas written in Ge'ez which are worn around the neck or arm (Bairu, 1986, p. 8; Shenk, 1988, p. 266). The *debteras* are a class of non-priests unique to the Ethiopian Church. They are experts in reading and liturgical song and are administrators of the church's traditional wisdom.

church. When the clergy died, the land was taken away and given to the other clergy assigned for the position because it was not hereditary.



Figure 1: *The gate of the church towards the north.*
Source: Photo Marshet Girmay, 2016.

TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGES IN THE *DEBR*

As representatives of the most important Christian institution in the land, the local Orthodox churches of Ethiopia frequently host objects of notable historical and cultural importance (Aymro, 1970, p. 33). Dekwa is the home to a large number of valuable religious objects. Many of the valuable objects are conserved and protected since the late 1940s (Gasiorowski, 1981, p. 56). Some treasures before the mentioned period had been burned down and the rest moved to other places because of the Italian war (Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, 2009). Moreover, in the early 1990s when chaos overwhelmed the country, lots of religious objects were looted by the local people (informant *melake miheret aba* Mulu Shitaneh). According to this informant, gold-made crown, sword that had used by the king, gold-made cross and other objects were looted at a time.

The cultural heritage of the church can be described by dividing them into tangible and intangible. Despite the trouble times the church passed through in terms of heritage preservation, the church contains a variety of tangible cultural treasures within its treasury house. They are found in a good condition as priests are aware of managing and protecting their sacred objects. Among the tangible cultural heritage found in the church includes are the *tabot* (Replica of the Arc of Covenant), liturgical objects, crosses, bells, ecclesiastical vestments and church musical instruments. Invaluable

documentary objects include manuscripts written in Ge'ez, some of which are illuminated.

Dekwa also preserves a large collection of *tabots*: more than five are said to be found in its Sanctuary (informant *Melake Mihret* Adane Abate). They are dedicated to Kidanemihret, St. George, St. Michael, Medaheniale and St. John. The *tabot* is usually wrapped with linen cloth and housed in *menber* and only priests are allowed to touch it. It is obvious that the value attached to this object is quite strong. The religious implication is awesome. Typically, the *tabot* is carried by priests during the celebration of *Timket* (Ethiopian Epiphany) and the annual commemoration of the church, on the month of *Yekatit* 16⁷ (informants *qes* Fente Teshome, Dejene Shibabaw). The festivals of the Virgin Mary are numerous in the context of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Budge, 2000, p. xvii). Contrary to the usual practice in other churches, in the *Debre Mehret* Dekwa Kidanemihret they carry a different *tabot* than the *tabot* dedicated to Kidanemihret during its annual festivity. Informants reason out that three people who were members of the church died immediately when they touched the *tabot* of Kidanemihret (*Melake Mihret aba* Mulu Shitaneh, *qes* Mehret Woldemariam). Thus, all devotees in the church keep themselves away from this particular *tabot* for fearing the consequences. Recently, those who are in charge of maintaining the church told me that they are too far from that particular site where the *tabot* is placed during their maintenance work (*ato* Kelemu Eshetie). The *tabot* is the one precious and the most sacred ecclesiastical object in every Ethiopian Orthodox church. It is one of the Judaic elements retained by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Schmidt, 1963, p. 54).

Traditionally, monasteries and churches have been the storehouses of manuscripts and archival documents. The libraries of ancient churches and monasteries located in Ethiopia have preserved large collections of important old manuscripts, most of them unique specimens (Belay, 1998, p. 32). *Debre Medahnit* Dekwa Kidanemihret is one of the above mentioned churches in which one can find significant number of documentary heritages. These documents are not only valuable for their artistic beauty and ecclesiastical works but also for their content, for they inform on historical issues, philosophy, and culture (Andrzejewski, et. al 1985, p. 203). They are valuable historical records and the source of information about our ancestors. Even though the manuscripts all over the countries were subject to natural deterioration and destruction, Dekwa is by far a better place for a safe storage of these documentary heritages irrespective of the status of these heritages, of which some are good and others are ruined. The lost documents are irreplaceable, any loss at present stage is final, and reconstruction is impossible. The loss of these documents in any reason would be disastrous. Even the loss of parts of a record from these collections for whatever cause is disastrous.

7. It is on the 16th that the monthly celebration of Kidanemihret falls in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church tradition. All the 30 days in a month are dedicated to different saints including St. Mary and Jesus himself. On these days, priests deliver religious services over the night.

Debre Medahnit Dekwa Kidanemihret also has impressive wall paintings and several illuminated manuscripts of the 17th Century. In the *Debre's* treasury house there are various collections of spiritual books written on parchments in Ge'ez. The church contains fair representation of almost all themes in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the manuscripts available in the church. Some of the more interesting manuscripts are the Holy Bible, New Testament, Miracles of Mary, the Faith of Fathers, liturgical books, hymnals, and prayer books.

Scholars of art history trace the beginning of the Second Gonderine style of painting to the last decade of the seventeenth century. The mural painting is observable over the main pillar of the church and the walls. Among the motives painted on the walls of Dekwa are popular ones such as Saint Mary and Saint Gebriel, which are dominant on the walls of the church. There are also paintings of Saint Abune Gebre Menfes Qiddus, the birth of the Christ, the Apostles during the Holy Supper and the Holy Trinity. As it is usual, the painter(s) are anonymous as until recently Ethiopian painters did not customarily sign their names to their work nor do their names appear in the historical records (Heldman, 1998, p. 2). It is to be noticed that these paintings are decaying and losing colour despite some maintenance so far. The fear is when repeated maintenance is made to these ancient paintings, which might lead to the loss of its originality (informant *ges Worke Hailemariam*).

ISSUES OF PRESERVATION

Cultural heritage is not eternal (ICCROM, 2006, p. 39). Its deterioration is an irreversible process that we can delay but not avoid completely. All materials comprising our cultural heritage are deteriorating as a result of physical, biological and/or chemical changes that occur over time (Ibid). The most common threats menacing this particular *Debr* are of natural and human origin. During the Italian invasion, the *Debr* and its material heritage has been affected as it had been in many other churches and monasteries in the region (informant *kesis Kefyalew*).

Natural factors that facilitate the deterioration of the *Debr* include geological, biological, climatic, hydrological factors and natural disasters. Among structural problems faced by the church are the fracturing and weathering which are observed in the external as well as internal walls and roof. The softy nature of the rock allows the passage of water through the cracks and fractures. Biological factors are also endangering the structure. For instance, a huge tree near the building is threatening it as the tree's roots have caused cracking. Besides, the surrounding trees, lichens and mosses also contribute to the damage. The tree also plays a significant role by providing habitat to animals like birds and rats. The dead bodies of the animals as well as plants themselves facilitate the growing search for water during the dry season.

According to UNESCO, the principal climatic factors responsible for the deterioration of both movable and immovable heritages are solar radiation, temperature variations, direct rainfall impact, wind pressure and humidity

(UNESCO, 1972). The resisting capacity of the rock together with the treasures in the *Debr* has decreased with age, the mismatching of the sacred objects component and the preservation area. Humidity is also another factor. These different factors are provoking the decay of various heritages within the church of Dekwa.



Figure 2: *Part of the roof of the meqdes*
Source: Photo Marshet Girmay, 2016.



Figure 3: *The church viewed from the south*
Source: Photo Marshet Girmay, 2016

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND MANAGEMENT

Ethiopia has one of the richest collections of sites, monuments and art objects in the whole of Africa, ranging from prehistoric sites to the recent historic period, which underlines the importance for comprehensive and effective legislation for the protection of her cultural heritage (Gasiorowski, 1981, p. 3). Though Ethiopia was not colonized, its structure of heritage management was established and enforced by western experts who followed their concepts of heritage conservation and management. During its colonial rule Italy endorsed some principles of heritage conservation (Ibid, p. 1). There was an initial effort to organize the safeguarding of ancient monuments in Ethiopia.

The Venice Charter of 1962 became the backbone of heritage conservation in many countries (Kifle, 1994, p. 23). In Ethiopia, during the pre 1966 period, it was the *Fetha Negest* that discharged its responsibility in the management process of cultural heritages (Paulos, 1968, p. 21). In the modern sense, Proclamation No. 229 of 1966 was the first act of legislation creating the basis for safeguarding the cultural heritage by the state (Negarit Gazeta, No. 229, 1966). This was of course derived from the 1955 Constitution of the country. Following the 1955 Constitution, fragmented legislations namely the Penal Code (1957) and the Civil Code (1960) articulated the need and preservation of cultural heritages in Ethiopia and narrated the consequences for those who transgressed the law. Moreover, the year 1966 is a remarkable period as far as heritage management is concerned for the subject is institutionalized despite the limitations enclosed (Solomon, 2010, p. 49). This institution was engaged in the preservation, protection, research and promotion activities concerning on the cultural heritages in Ethiopia. In the 1970s the World Heritage Convention emerged and boldly emphasized the authenticity of the heritage. This newly-born concept of the 1970s gradually forced heritage professionals to revisit their heritage conservation and management praxis in their respective countries and to move away from their fabric-based conservation strategies, which cannot work in all cases. So as to find a practical context-based heritage conservation framework, the need to explore the current trends of heritage conservation and management became mandatory (Tunprawat, 2009, p. 89). Therefore, Ethiopia, based on the recommendation given by UNESCO in 1989, was forced to develop new heritage regulations in line with the UNESCO documents (Gasiorowski, 1981, p.67).

One of the major problems of churches in relation to heritage management is the definition given to “antiquities” under the heritage legislation document of 1966 (Ibid). There is also a question of ownership. According to the Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage Proclamation No. 209/2000, Cultural heritage may be owned by the state or by individuals. The proclamation also classified cultural heritage at national and regional level. However, there is a conflict when this proclamation comes to the church to work. Religious heritages are quite different from other types of heritages in the sense that they have spirituality attachment which can even be touched only by those who are “allowed’ (Nolan & Nolan, 1992, p.

119). Believers of the specific religion claim that religious heritages should be kept within the church because they serve for religious purpose and are undeserved to outsiders who might defame their spirituality (Orbasli & Woodward, 2010, p. 5). Thus, there is dilemma regarding to the possession and managing of religious heritages between ecclesiastical and secular authorities. It can be argued that present problems encountered by religious heritages such as looting, illicit trafficking, vandalism, trespassing, ignorance and neglect have all stemmed from the fading sense of heritage ownership of local communities. As argued by Tunprawat many problems affecting religious heritages today emanate from the unsuccessful communication between heritage professionals and the public (2009, p. 100).

Uhlig (1983) describes tens of thousands of churches and monasteries throughout the country, mainly in the northern parts of Ethiopia. These churches hold important collections of manuscripts, the extent of which have not yet been established. Sacredness is the inherited value that makes religious heritage different from other types of heritages. For millennia, sacred places and religious celebrations have attracted worshipers. More than half of the world heritages registered under UNESCO are religious ones (Sacred Destinations, 2011). The religious heritage is preserved for the faithful to practice, but the same heritage, considered as cultural heritage or other heritages, within a national system for conservation for the public at large to enjoy. Inevitably, the aims of the two groups in managing the respective heritages cannot be similar in any time because the aims usually emanate from the meaning and the value attached to the heritage.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND HERITAGE PRESERVATION TECHNIQUES IN THE *DEBR*

Debre Medahnit Dekwa Kidanemihret has been neglected for a long time. Until now public authorities or institutions have done little in order to preserve the church and its objects from decay and destruction. An exception was a religious congress organized by the religious institution Mahbere Kidusan in 2016 and also the financial grant (100,000.00 ETB) by the North Gondar Culture and Tourism Department for the underway maintenance. The congress was held at the *Debre Medahnit* Dekwa Kidanemihret for two days and it saw the participation of guests from different levels.

Yet, throughout centuries this *Debr* has enforced its own management techniques that have enabled several objects to survive over several hundreds of years. Even during the time of hardship when different factors threatened the church, the church had enforced its own methods in order to keep its heritages safe from damage (informant *ges* Worke Woldemariam, *ges* Fente Teshome, *ges* Qeleme Tashu, and *ges* Petros Manegerew). The primal conservation technique used was the assignment of indigenous guardians which was highly crucial for the sustenance of religious heritages. In particular the clergy who has won the support of the faithful and who have the trust from the church because of their spiritual achievements have been responsible for the management process. The church also resorted to declaring “weeks of fasting” throughout which they selected a man to be appointed as the head of *ika bet*, small building where religious heritages are

stored. The divine power is believed to have indicated the “right” person. Typically the candidate chosen is one who has not been involved in the church management and he may even be from a different monastery. After the chosen person is being notified he comes and falls down in front of the group of priests or may be monks during “*tselote me’ad*”.⁸ Then, a group of prayers make “*tselote mariam*” which is fully dedicated to this person by frequently mentioning his name. This person will then remain in charge of the *ika bet* as long as he is good enough in health (informant *liqe liqawint Ezira*). My informants interestingly note that this man is also responsible to take manuscripts in the open air and take care of the storage environment intermittently to prevent from decay by natural causes because they are liable to rot otherwise.

Ika bet can be a small building built inside the church yard or it can be a hidden storage inside the wall of the church. They dig out the wall to some distance and make a kind of cover which resembles the rest of the wall. Sometimes it is found in the roof which could be too far from the ground. In the study church, the *tabot* of Kidanemihret is stored somewhere in the roof and is inaccessible. This is because they value religious heritages in terms of religion, ethics, philosophy, aesthetics and culture. Religious objects, including *saten*, *albasat* or clothes and other smaller religious objects, are stored in the locally made rectangular wooden box at the *ika bet*.

During the time of political crisis in Ethiopia, informants noted that, local *balabats* were in charge of managing religious objects at home. Many valuable religious objects had been given to the local *balabats*, who were exemplary in their spirituality, with the full consent of the local community for better protection. The local *balabats* had won the support of the local community because they had, relatively speaking, more than enough individual property and were accustomed to support the needy in the surrounding in addition to their spiritual maturity. Thus, they were simply icons of that particular community. In return, the local community had given free labour service on the *balabats*’ farm. This could be possible only for some selective religious objects. There are some others which could not be even touched by any lay man. However, objects in the church like umbrellas in different forms and sizes, and church musical instruments were legible to be handed to the *balabats*. The stronger reason for this was that they have had much trust and respect from the community as far as religious heritages concerned. They are believed to be responsible and committed to their religion (informant *qes Worke Hailemariam*).

In early times, guardians of the church also used their own “traditional” storage techniques in order to preserve and save the documents from man-made and natural disasters. For instance, they used to wrap the manuscripts with leather or clothes and hang them by a strap with books on walls. Primarily, the manuscript binding tradition is quite interesting which hugely contribute to its duration. Its resistance against natural hazards is quite good as well. According to Sergew (1981: 21), in the Ethiopian book

⁸. *Tselote me’ad* is a praying session when monks and priests come together for some special occasion usually concluded at 3:00 pm.

making tradition the cover of manuscripts are usually wooden and rarely leather. Even, the types of woods used for cover were selected in terms of the quality to resist decaying and other hazards caused by insects. Lightness and its simplicity to curve for the purpose were also the other criteria to select the wood (informant *ges Fente Teshome*). Skins from all types of animals also tanned for book covers for different purposes. However, only some animals' skin is curiously used for religious manuscripts preparation and for the cover. Those animals considered as unclean from religious point of view could not be used. It is the skin of goat usually used for the manuscript. The reason is because it is stronger and cheaper than sheep's skin and others.

The tradition of manuscript binding technique goes back as far as to the fifteenth century in Ethiopia (Sergew, 1981: 26). The choice of using the type of skin depends on the size and character of the manuscript for the cover purpose (Uhlig, 2007). If the manuscript is psalm which is smaller in size they usually prefer to use the skin from the goat and if it is for a big manuscript like *Senkesar*⁹ they prefer the skin of cow. Sheep symbolizes naivety in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church teaching and is positively accepted. On the other hand, goat symbolizes sinner (informant *ges Fente Teshome*). Yet, it does not have any problem using their skins. No one can notice one manuscript which bears decorations on the surface of the boards because the purpose is to prevent the manuscript from easy damage. Thus, they remain blank and simple. Those which are often demanded for religious services are usually lined with a coloured cloth. According to the tradition in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a religious manuscript should not be left uncovered. Therefore, those manuscripts that are covered in leather or wood are equipped with external cloth covers. If it had been uncovered in leather or wood, it could not have been preserved better for they are found scattered and nearly dumped. However, not all manuscripts are covered in leather or wood in the study church.

In the northern parts of Ethiopia, there are various types of land tenure. The land granted to the church and to those who serve the church is called *semon meret*.¹⁰ The church had *siso meret* 1/3 of the total land belongs to the Ethiopian people. There are written documents witnessing the granting of land to churches and monasteries during the Gonderine period (Crummey, 2011, p. 3). In addition, *ye'amora t'ebaqi meret*, literally "bird-watcher's land", is a plot of land handed to a person (*yemora t'ebaqi*) who was in charge of the protection of the church from the waste and damage caused by birds. In most churches and monasteries, the sacred tree grove is the home to several bird species. The Amharic term of *amora* refers to a group of birds. In the Ethiopian Christian tradition, the crow, a black bird having a raucous call, is considered as possessing an evil spirit owing to the cultural association of black with something unpleasant. For instance, the sixteenth-century chronicle on the Muslim-Christian war documented that the church of Debre Asbo, later known as Debre Libanos, was set on fire. Arab Faqqih, the Yemeni chronicler of Ahmed Gragn's campaign, tells

⁹. The book of the daily Saints for the entire year and explaining the origin and the meaning of feast.

that the Muslim Jihadists were angered when the church resisted the fire. They finally tried to render it impure by shading the walls with the dirt of crows and vultures (Lester, 2003, p. 125).

In Ethiopian Christian society vultures and eagles are treated as unclean, for the reason that they feed on leftovers from dead animals. It occurs sometimes that such animals bring pieces of their captured carrion to the church yard. In opposition, the white dove is an emblem of peace and as such it is welcomed in various structures of the church yard. The dove is also the symbol of the Holy Spirit and means by which people could be redeemed and ascend to heaven. Yet, any kinds of birds are prevented from finding a shelter in the *qiddist* (holy of holies), the innermost and sacred partition in both the rectangular and circular church architecture. Thus, the role of the bird watcher is to keep birds, mainly crows and vultures, the consumers of leftovers, away from the church compound and to prevent the doves from entering the sacred partitions of the church. He is therefore responsible to maintain the sacred and cleanliness of the church and its holy objects (informant *kesis* Kefyalew).

The church's material culture is also protected by another office, that of *yedemet kordaj meret*. This land is given to those who look after the cats that shall protect the religious objects from being destroyed by rats. In popular belief, both from a symbolic and a practical point of view, rats are believed to be devil. The rat's presence invites the serpent, which in biblical tradition is the most devilish creature. In addition, it is well known that rats can provoke massive damage to food, objects and material culture. Hence, the duty of *yedemet kordaj* is to watch over the collections in the church from damage by rats and to make sure these animals are consumed by the cat. Unlike the birds *amora* and dogs, cats are accepted in churches and with the graceful monkeys they are often the only animals allowed in church compounds (see Rouaud, 2004). It is believed that the cat cannot desecrate sacred church materials. Thus, churches assign people to raise and take care of cats in the church.

Traditional and modern manuscript collections in Ethiopia have suffered throughout times the effects of war and human-caused destruction. As a result of it churches and monasteries, during troubled times, have resorted to preserving documents by collecting and keeping them in remote and inaccessible locations. In Dekwa Kidanemihret such a practice has been enforced. Responsible churchmen are typically mistrustful of strangers and are aware that the prospect of an uncertain future could bring similar hazards against church materials. Therefore, they have a different and inaccessible place where all valuable church materials are kept and preserved.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is obvious that the indigenous heritage conservation and management techniques enforced by Dekwa Kidanemihret, as well as by most of the churches of the Gondar region, are today unable to meet the professional

¹⁰ *Semon* is the Ge'ez word for eight days; Gebre-Wold Ingida-Worq, 1962, p. 309.

principles in conserving and managing religious heritage. The safeguarding of cultural heritage requires serious professional skills of which most churches are lacking (ICCROM, 2006, p. 49). Because in a religious setting religious heritages are sacred by nature, people have a unique emotional attachment to them and this provokes conflicts with government officials working on culture and tourism offices. Churches and monasteries often apply a “close door” policy with regard to heritages hosted within their premises. Thus, the man in charge of the *ika bet* is typically unwilling to show church properties for anyone irrespective of the latter’s religious or political affiliation, except for those who are assigned to manage it. Churchmen explain this attitude with a lack of trust which was the result of previous negative experiences (informant *kesis* Kefyalew).

At the *Debre Medahnit* Dekwa Kidanemihret local management practices have been crucial to preserve the institution’s valuable goods. Yet, it is obvious that today these are not sufficient to prevent further damage to the church’s structure as well as to its objects. New management techniques should be put in force. Trenches and drainage systems, for instance, should be cleaned to minimize the amount of infiltration of water. To reduce the impact of rainfall, sunshine, and biological colonization it is good to cut the trees on the acme of the church with special attention to protect those tree species endangered from extinction.

Conservation work should be based on a well planned and organized approach and multidisciplinary study should be conducted. The indigenous preservation method in the church should be backed by a scientific approach. In addition, promotion work should be properly carried out. The Culture and Tourism Offices and the Church should inform visitors, researchers as well as the concerned bodies by using various mechanisms of promotion such as, magazines, newspapers, and radio. Such activities could pave the way for the proper study and documentation of the church’s heritage as well as for providing up-to-date and reliable information for visitors.

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LIST OF INFORMANTS

Name	Age	Date of Interview	Place	Remarks
<i>qesis</i> Ale-mayehu	56	January 15/2016	Woken	A priest in Dekwa Kidanemihret church who is entitled to preach gospel in various churches
<i>qes</i> Aklilu Desse	61	January 15/2016	Woken	A priest in Dekwa Kidanemihret church.
<i>qes</i> Fente Teshome	57	January 15/2016	Dabat	Formerly he was head of Debre Genet St. George church in Dabat town. Now he works as the head of the North Gonder Diocese Ecclesiastical Office, Dabat Branch.
<i>ato</i> Dejene Shibabaw	66	March 2/2016	Woken	A priest in Dekwa Kidanemihret church
<i>qes</i> Mihret Wolde Mariam	55	November 10/2016	Gondar	A priest in Dekwa Kidanemihret and working as a member of the fund raising committee who is in charge of the maintenance of Debre Medahnit Dekwa Kidanemihret.
<i>melake mihret abba</i> Mulu Shitaneh	80	November 10/2016	Gondar	A well respected monk in the community who played the leading role in the establishment of many churches in Gondar and the surrounding, namely the church of Saint Gebriel in Gondar town kebele 14. And, he is also the chair person of the fund raising committee who is in charge of the maintenance of Debre Medahnit Dekwa Kidanemihret.
<i>qes</i> Worke Haile-mariam	71	March 2/2016	Dabat	Formerly he was the chairman of the Council of churches in the Woreda. He is a native of Woken. He has good knowledge on the history of the church and the land tenure systems.
<i>qes</i> Qeleme Tashu	77	February 12/2016	Abtera	Until very recently he was the head of St. Michael church in Abtera. He is a well known religious scholar. He knows and has read many of the manuscripts with historical information at the various churches and monasteries of North Gondar. Currently he is devoted to teaching his spiritual children.
<i>melake mihret</i> Adane Abate	76	March 2/2016	Dekwa	Head of Dekwa Kidanemihret church
<i>liqe liqaw-int</i> Ezera	67	January 30/2016	Gonder	Head of the church of Medahñialem and the four great church schools in Gondar town. He is a “professor” of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahādo Church and is called ‘Four Eyes’. His knowledge about the church and the various manuscripts in the church is remarkable.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

**COMPONENTS OF THE RECENT FERTILITY DECLINE
IN AMHARA NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE, ETHIO-
PIA: A DECOMPOSITION ANALYSIS OF ETHIOPIA
DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY**

Getachew Nibret¹, Nega Mihret², and Tariku Dejene³

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine socioeconomic and demographic factors that are responsible for the recent fertility decline in the Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia by using the 2000, 2005 and 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey. Data management and analysis were carried out using STATA 13. The analysis technique employed in this study was multivariate decomposition. The findings of the study showed that there was on average 537 excess births among 1,000 women of the reproductive age during the year 2000 as compared to the year 2001 with a 95% CI (422.7, 650.4) in the region. The result also showed that about 96% (516.0 births per 1,000 women) of these excess births are attributable to differences in characteristics of women between the two periods with 95% CI (378.3, 653.6). The remaining 4% (20.6 births per 1,000 women) are explained by the changes in response to behaviour. In conclusion, the primary drivers of the recent fertility change during the last decade in the region were the shift observed in the age at first marriage, improvement in child survival and increased urbanization.

Keywords: demography, decomposition, fertility decline, Amhara, Ethiopia

INTRODUCTION

Fertility is the most dynamic element in determining the size, rate of growth and the age-sex structure of a population. In the absence of substantial migration, at any given level of mortality, changes in fertility causes variations in the rates of natural increase exert a powerful influence on the age structure of a population. Fertility is a major expanding force in population dynamics and a major neutralizing force to population reduction through mortality. Fertility is also a vital factor in the determination of the social, economic and political features of a nation. The fertility of a particular population results from a complex interaction of different factors, and different groups within a population may respond to similar factors in different ways. These different groups within a population are likely to display

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different fertility levels and trends (Bogue, 1971; Graft, 1979; United Nations, 1987).

In Ethiopia the total fertility rate was 6.7 children per woman in 1990 and 5.2 children per woman in 2005, the reduction in the total fertility rate over the 15-year span was not as anticipated (Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia], 1993; Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia] & ORC Macro, 2006). In particular, there was a slight difference between the 2005 and 2011 in fertility rate (4.8 children per woman). However, a considerable regional variation in the reduction of fertility was observed. The overall decline of fertility in the Amhara National Regional State between 2000 (5.9 children per women) and 2011 (4.2 children per women), for instance, was very high as compared to the corresponding figure for the Oromiya National Regional State (6.4 Vs. 5.6) and the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (5.9 Vs. 4.9) (Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia] & ORC Macro, 2001, 2006; Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia] & ICF International, 2012).

The specific factors that explain the incipient course of fertility transition in the region and their relative contribution, however, are unknown. It is not clear whether the decision on the number of children is taken purely privately within the household decision-making framework or whether it was influenced by socioeconomic development discourse or it is shaped and regulated at the community level. Neither it is known whether the National Population Policy targets of 4.0 total fertility rate in 2015 (Transitional Government of Ethiopia, 1993) have been sufficiently well-implemented in the Amhara National Regional State to have significantly influenced the age at first marriage, reproductive intentions, and under-five mortality in the region. In addition, detailed studies on nature and paces of fertility in the Amhara National Regional State is valuable and needed as major input for planning, implementation, and evaluation of population and development programs and the study of differentials of fertility has importance in detecting relevant variables of interest for interventions. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to examine socioeconomic and demographic factors of the recent fertility change in the region.

METHODS

Data sources

The main data sources for the present study were the 2000 and 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS). The 2000 and 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Surveys are parts of the worldwide MEASURE DHS project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey primarily targeted women aged 15-49 and used standardized questionnaires. The sample for all Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey were based on a two-stage stratified sample of the households (Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia] & ICF International, 2012). The EDHS data had records of 1,909 and 2,087 women of reproductive age for Amhara region for the years 2000 and 2011, respectively. All records of women for the region were considered in the analysis.

Variable specification

The main response variable of the present study was children ever born which is most closely related to the number of children a woman has had when she is done having children and is a self-reported measure of completed fertility for those women surveyed. Two groups of explanatory variables, demographic and socio-economic, were considered in the present study. The explanatory variables included were the place of residence, women's education, current mother's age, experience of under-five children's death, age at first union, and reproductive intentions.

Analysis

Data management and analysis were carried out using the STATA 13. The analysis technique employed in this study was multivariate decomposition. The analysis technique uses Poisson regression model of children ever born to women of two groups. In this study, time is considered as a grouping variable to decompose the average number of births into the components attributable to differences in characteristics, endowment, and a component attributable to differences in the effects of characteristics or behavioural responses and coefficients. The decomposition technique is an improvement over many other decomposition methods as it resolves the problems of path dependence by computing asymptotic standard errors and identification problem for dummy variables included in the model. The 2000 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey was considered for the sake of comparison while the 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey was taken as a reference group. The endowment reflects the expected difference in children ever born if women in the comparison group were given the distribution of covariates prevailing in the reference group. The characteristic component reflects the expected difference in children ever born if women in the reference group experienced behavioural responses of the comparison group for each covariate (Powers, 2011).

Data quality assessment

Reconstructing fertility trends by calendar year over the last fifteen years in all the three surveys were used for assessment of data quality. The visual inspect of the reconstructed trends suggests that data quality varies greatly across surveys and also illustrates different types of data quality problems. Fertility estimates in the Amhara National Regional State seems to be affected by severe data quality problems. Published total fertility rates are well below the reconstructed estimates suggesting possible displacements

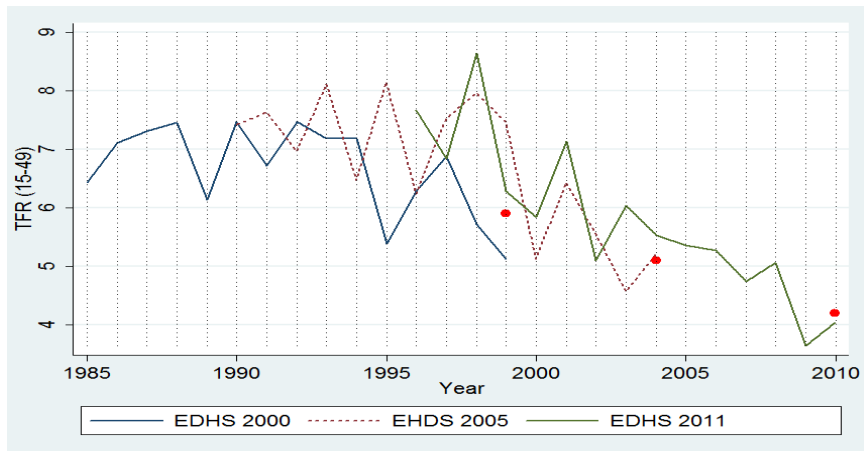


Figure 1: Comparisons of retrospective estimates of fertility and published total fertility rate, Amhara National Regional State 1985-2010

Source: Calculated from 2000, 2005 and 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey data.

RESULTS

The proportion of women of reproductive age who were married before reaching 18 years of age has shown a significant reduction from 80.0% to 63.4% in the period 2000 to 2011. An improvement in child survival was also witnessed which was signalled by the fall in proportion of women with a history of child death from 35.6% to 24.8%. A slight increase in percentage of women desiring to bear an additional child, from 51.2% to 56.3%, was also observed during the same period (Table 1).

Again socioeconomic characteristics as measured by urbanization over time and improvement in educational status of women were also observed. The proportion of women who were living in urban areas rose from 12.2% to 22.5%; moreover, the proportion of women who had at least a primary level of education in the region increased by more than twofold from 16.5% to 38.6% (Table 1).

A decline in the average number of lifetime fertility, children ever born, was observed in the 11-year span considered. The average number of children ever born per 1,000 women of reproductive age was 3,391 in 2000 and 2,854 in 2011. The average number of children ever born to women was disaggregated by various characteristics of women. The disaggregated result shows that the magnitude of fertility was higher among women who were married early, illiterate and rural resident during both survey periods. In addition, women with a history of child death and those who do not want to bear an additional child had the highest fertility. The average number of children ever born to women of age group 15-19 across time shows a per 1,000 in 2011.

Table 1: *Percentage distribution of women by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics 2000 and 2011, Amhara National Regional State*

Variables and categories	Survey year		
		2000	2011
Current age	15-19	22.0	25.3
	20-24	16.9	17.3
	25-29	17.0	16.4
	30-34	11.8	12.2
	35-39	13.2	12.2
	40-44	9.2	7.9
	45-49	9.9	8.7
Early marriage	No	19.9	36.6
	Yes	80.1	63.4
Experience of child death	No	64.4	75.2
	Yes	35.6	24.8
Reproductive intention	No	48.8	43.7
	Yes	51.2	56.3
Education	Illiterate	83.5	61.4
	Primary	10.7	29.4
	Secondary+	5.8	9.2
Residence	Urban	12.2	21.5
	Rural	87.8	78.5
Total	100.0	100.0	
Number of observations	1,909(3,820)	2,087	

Source: Calculated from 2000 and 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey data.

Table 2: *Distribution of women and average number of children ever born per 1,000 women by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of women 2000 and 2011, Amhara National Regional State*

Variables and categories		Survey year			
		2000		2011	
		No.	ACEB/1,000 women	No.	ACEB/1,000 women
Current age	15-19	842	265	1,123	115
	20-24	647	1,443	766	1,067
	25-29	650	2,925	728	2,359
	30-34	449	4,655	541	3,919
	35-39	504	5,500	541	5,142
	40-44	351	6,809	349	6,227
	45-49	378	7,000	387	7,544
Early marriage	No	762	1,119	1,622	809
	Yes	3,058	3,957	2,812	4,034
Reproductive	No	1,865	4,590	1,937	4,469
	Yes	1,955	2,246	2,497	1,602
Experience of child death	No	2,461	2,017	3,335	1,755
	Yes	1,359	5,879	1,098	6,193
Education	Illiterate	3,191	3,761	2,723	4,003
	Primary	408	1,713	1,303	1,182
	Secondary+	221	1,145	407	528
Residence	Urban	465	2,326	953	1,815
	Rural	3,355	3,539	3,480	3,139
Total	3,820	3,391	4,433	2,854	

Source: Calculated from 2000 and 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey data.

Note: ACEB = Average Number of Children Ever Born.

However, this gap narrows down over time as age advances. This is an evidence of the women in the region who were attempting to postpone their debut to reproduction over time (Table 2).

The detailed decomposition of fertility using three groups of determinants of fertility is undertaken. The decomposition produces two component, endowment and coefficient, for each characteristic considered in the analysis. As such, the endowment and coefficient contribution of each determinant to the change in fertility across time are outlined along with their 95% CI. A positive endowment coefficient for a covariate indicates the expected reduction in differential of children ever born between the two periods if the distribution of the covariate prevailing during the 2011 survey were prevalent in the comparison period.

There was on average 537 excess births among 1,000 women of the reproductive age during the year 2000 as opposed to the year 2011 in the Amhara National Regional State with a 95% CI (422.7, 650.4). The result shows 96% (516.0 births per 1,000 women) of these excess births are attributable to differences in characteristics of women between the two periods with 95% CI (378.3, 653.6). The remaining 4% (20.6 births per 1,000 women) are explained by the changes in response to a behaviour; albeit, the result is not statistically significant (Table 3).

The larger proportion of the differential, 84.1% happened due to the shift in demographic characteristics during the period. Women were postponing reproduction to later age for various reasons over the course of time. This preference has contributed to 19% (102 births per 1,000 women) with a 95% CI (88.3, 115.7) of the gap in fertility of the region over the 11-year span. The shift in the level of early marriage observed in the reference period resulted to an average reduction of 225 births per 1,000 women with 95% CI (183.8, 266.0).

The decline in child mortality is another demographic determinant that exerted an influence in the fertility change in the region. The change in the experience of the death of children, particularly under-five mortality, among women in the region across 2000 to 2011 contributed to a 19.6% (105 births per 1,000 women) with a 95% CI (85.7, 124.2) decline in fertility. The difference in desire for more children accounted 3.6% of the fertility gap in the region between 2000 and 2011 (Table 3).

Even though education of a mother is an empirically established noteworthy predictor of fertility, its contribution to the change in fertility of the region was insignificant. Furthermore, the degree of community literacy was observed to have no importance in the fertility decline of the region. The contribution due to the difference in place of residence was significant and 42.4 births per 1,000 women with 95% CI (16.2, 68.5), that is, 8% of the total differential was obviated due to urbanization (Table 3).

Table 3: *Decomposition of change in children ever born (2000-2011), Amhara National Regional State*

Variables	Endowment		Coefficient								
	Coef.	P-value	95%	CI		%	Coef.	P-value	95%	CI	%
Demographic	451.1					84.1	-28.5				-5.4
Age	102.0	0.00	88.3		115.7	19.0	-26.5	0.81	-238.4	185.5	-4.9
Married early	224.9	0.00	183.8		266.0	41.9	-7.8	0.83	-78.5	62.9	-1.5
Child death	105.0	0.00	85.7		124.2	19.6	2.9	0.81	-20.5	26.4	0.5
Desire for	19.2	0.00	12.2		26.2	3.6	2.9	0.84	-24.2	30.0	0.5
Socioeconomic	153.5					28.6	-56.3				-10.4
Illiterate	13.6	0.46	-22.6		49.9	2.5	-36.2	0.81	-332.6	260.2	-6.7
Primary	2.0	0.91	-35.0		39.1	0.4	-4.5	0.82	-41.8	32.9	-0.8
Secondary +	1.7	0.71	-7.5		11.0	0.3	6.8	0.81	-49.0	62.6	1.3
Urban	42.4	0.00	16.2		68.5	7.9	-9.4	0.82	-89.4	70.6	-1.8
Community literacy*	93.8	0.12	-25.5		2130	17.5	-13.0	0.79	-107.9	82.0	-2.4
Constant	NA	NA	NA		NA	NA	101.7	0.81	-729.4	932.8	19.0
Component	516.0	0.000	378.3		653.6	96.2	20.6	0.826	-162.4	203.6	3.8
Raw Difference	536.5	0.000	422.7		650.4	100.					
Number of ob- servations		3,996									

Source: Calculated from 2000 and 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey data.

Notes: NA = Not Applicable CI = Confidence Interval

* Community literacy refers to the proportion of women of reproductive age with at least a primary level of education within a cluster/community

DISCUSSION

The recent fertility decline in the region necessitates an understanding of the causes of the change since this can provide relevant information for framing population and reproductive health program and policy. The analysis revealed that over the last decade the majority (96%) of the change in fertility was attributable to changes in characteristics and endowment. The demographic changes have the greatest contribution (contributing to 84% to the total change), and they were the increase in women's age at first marriage and postponement of births to later ages, improvement in child survival and increase in the proportion of women who wanted to limit birth.

The improvement of age at first marriage alone contributed to a 42% reduction of the average number of children ever born in the region during the last decade. Age at first marriage; female education; awareness for having small and prosperous family; and contraception are the four essential pre-conditions for deliberate family limitation in sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2002). In societies where marriage happens at an early age, the beginning of childbirth is early and the period during which women bear children is relatively long, resulting in higher fertility than in those societies where the age at marriage is late (Bongaarts & Potter, 1983). A number of studies have also linked fertility decline to a rise in age at first marriage (Blacker, 2002; Ekisa & Hinde, 2005; Vavrus, 2000; Woldemicael, 2008).

Demographic changes related to women's experience of the death of children emerged amongst the drivers of the recent fertility decline in Amhara region. This finding conforms to the previous studies that documented a vicious cycle of poor child survival, low practice of fertility regulation and high fertility (Bertrand, 2003; Gyimah, 2002; United Nations, 2012). Our finding corroborates with the replacement effect theory, which refers to couples' deliberate attempts to replace any child who dies at an early age in order to attain a desired number of surviving off-springs at the end of their reproductive life (United Nations, 2012; Easterlin, 1985). The African fertility decline has begun in Kenya, Botswana, and Zimbabwe due to the reduction in infant mortality rates to a level below 70 per 1,000 live births (Caldwell et al., 1992). Blacker (2002) observed that better development indicators such as under-five mortality experience had a strong link with a substantial fertility decline.

About 29% of the overall changes in fertility were attributable to changes related to socioeconomic condition. Our results shed light on the role of urbanization for the recent fertility decline in the region. The rate of urbanization in the region has increased from 9% in 1994 to 17% in 2016 (Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia], 1999, 2013). The behavioural and lifestyle changes that accompany urbanization are believed to be responsible for increased desire for small family and adoption of contraception (Adhikari, 2010; Bertrand, 2003). There have been marked declines in urban fertility since 2000, but the rural-urban fertility gap has widened to nearly 2 children. The national urban total fertility rate has declined from 3.4 in 2000 to

approximately 2.6 in 2011 with the rate of 0.2 child/year/mother (Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia] & ORC Macro, 2001; Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia] & ICF International, 2012). Thus, despite the decline of fertility in the region during the last decade, the total fertility rate values in urban areas of the region has been declining approximately in threefold faster rate than that of the national urban average. This continuing urban fertility transition has not yet carried over to rural areas where 85% of the population still lives. Here rural total fertility rate, which had declined from 8.2 children per woman in 2000 to 4.3 children per woman in 2011 (Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia] & ORC Macro, 2001; Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia] & ICF International, 2012). Other researches also argued that urbanization emerged as one of the dominant explanations for the observed fertility declines (Watkins, 2000; Ekisa & Hinde, 2005; Woldemicael, 2008; Mutuku, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that Ethiopia has been experiencing a decline in fertility during the last decade. Although this decline was not equally shared in all the regions of the country, the Amhara National Regional State has shown a marked decline. The fertility rate of the region is one of the lowest compared to the other regions of the country. The major drivers of fertility decline during the last decade were the shift observed in age at first marriage, the improvement in child survival and increased urbanization. The impact of education in reducing fertility is only indirect and has not shown an impact on fertility transition.

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BOOK REVIEWS

ኦርቶዶክሳዊ ቅዱሳን ሥዕላት። ታሪክ፤ መንፈሳዊ ትርጉም፤ የሊቃውንት አስተምህሮ እና ሌሎችም (*Ortoksawi qəddusat sə'əlat: tarik, mǎnfāsawi tǝrgum, yǎliqawənt astāmhəro ənnə leločəm*, 'Orthodox Saintly Paintings: History, Spiritual Meaning, Teachings of Religious Intellectuals and Others'). By Hailemariam Shemelis. Addis Ababa: Mahibere Qidusan, 2007 A.M. (=2014 A.C.). Pp. viii + 237; 24 images. 50.00 ETB.

The author of this book is a multifaceted figure: a clinical pharmacist working in the Black Lion Specialized Hospital, Hailemariam Shimelis is also a web page designer and painter and he has a passion for religious art history. Hailemariam has published different articles in the internet on the topic of Ethiopian icons and he is currently working on two new books about "The Icon of the Virgin Mary in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church" and the "Icon of Saint Arsema" (Hailemariam Shemelis, 2016).

Ortoksawi qəddusat sə'əlat is called to become an obliged reading for those interested in Ethiopian Christian art, including its unique aesthetics and traditions as well as its artists, who still today are keeping the art alive in the newly constructed churches or in those being in process of renovation. The significance of the work is enhanced by being written in Amharic, which may allow the wider Ethiopian public to learn on the art history of their country.

The book is structured in five chapters and each chapter includes dozens of sections and subsections dealing on different issues. Chapter 1 begins with the historical origin of painting and its biblical connections. Based on the biblical narrative, Hailemariam traces back the beginning of sacred art to the creation of Adam by God. Then he continues by describing the times of early Christianity, when different schisms resulted in the separation of western and eastern Christianities. These differences had a profound impact on the style and use of sacred paintings in Eastern orthodox churches, Latin Christian churches and oriental churches. Then the book moves further in time to the period of the European Reformation of the sixteenth century. Here Hailemariam focuses on the iconoclastic positions of such figures as John Calvin and the anti-Marian stand of the Reformists or the Protestants.

Further the book addresses the challenges that sacred paintings face today in the ancient monasteries and churches of the country. To solve these problems the author suggests some solutions as well as directions that could help to alleviate such challenges by the concerned bodies and stakeholders. Finally the book shifts its focus towards the miracles that saintly paintings and hagiographies have allegedly produced.

The strength of this book is that it has the appearance of a scholarly work. Thus, even if the author is not a professional art historian his work is well

edited and written. Hailemariam uses a number of historical sources and produces a logical connection and interpretation of historical events. Thus, for instance, his analysis of the differences among Christian churches on their specific use of art and religious icons is remarkable. Such insights might be of help for scholars interested in studying art history and also for those painters who are seeking to paint and restore tarnished wall paintings of Ethiopian churches.

Yet, the work has also its own shortcomings. Thus, the main argument of the book seems to be purely of a theological nature as Hailemariam's chief interest appears to be that of defending the doctrine and dogmas of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Therefore, the approach of the analysis is clearly biased and it often takes a condemnatory tone when he presents the views and dogmas of those standing outside his church, something that shall not be acceptable in an academic study. Thus, for instance Hailemariam accuses the Swiss reformist John Calvin of having condemned the cult to Virgin Mary. Yet, truth to the fact is that John Calvin did not undermine the Virgin Mary; he rather believed that knowing about the Virgin Mary is an integral part of knowing about Jesus Christ (Ross Mackenzie, 1982, p. 69). Moreover, the use of sources can only be described as weak. Indeed, for a book that delves on the doctrines and dogmas of the Ethiopian Orthodox church concerning sacred art using only secondary literature is surprising. What about the dozens of—mostly Ge'ez-language—manuscripts, hagiographies, royal chronicles and treatises that at some point or another deal with sacred art? Many of these manuscripts are today available in critical editions or even online and it is these that should be studied first when trying to describe the traditions and dogmas of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Similarly, the author did not think it necessary to conduct interviews with the religious artists that in contemporary Ethiopia maintain alive the millenarian tradition of Ethiopia's sacred art. The text also lacks a final bibliography. The book might not be even free of the suspicion of plagiarism as Hailemariam often uses certain interpretations by other authors without providing the due reference or citing the sources (e.g. in pp. 117-118). Last but not the least, some technical aspects could have been handled better. Thus, the group of images that are organized in a sort of appendix at the end of the book (pp. 229-237) could have been more profitably used if embedded in the main text.

Ortoksawi qəddusat sə'əlat can be an important reading for art historians and the general public as a source of information on the history of art of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in particular and the history of art in Ethiopia in general. However, the readers should need to be cautious that Hailemariam's approach is deeply biased, theologically.

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Abebe Asfaw

MA in modern history

የጳውሎስ ሻሻ የህይወት ታሪክ (1926-1984 [A.M.]) (*Pawlos Ñoñño yāhəywāt tarik*, 'The Biography of Pawlos Ñoñño [1933-1992]'). By Dereje Ti'izazu. Addis Ababa: Artistic Publishing Enterprise, 2006 A.M. Pp. 308, ca. 55 illustrations. ISBN: 978-99944-974-4-7. Price ETB 84.00.

Writing the biography of public figures is not an easy task. A passionate writer and journalist, Dereje Ti'izazu has faced this big challenge. His *Pawlos Ñoñño yāhəywāt tarik* ('The Biography of Pawlos Ñoñño') is a step forward towards documenting the deeds of one of the pioneers in the history of the Ethiopian press, the journalist, novelist, historian and musician Pawlos Ñoñño, probably one of the most influential Ethiopian intellectuals of the twentieth century. Conventionally the writing of a biography is aimed at statesmen, ambassadors, and military figures, whereas the life of other professionals such as teachers and journalists, who are often considered as people without stories, is rarely told (Tsehay Jenberu, 2008 A.M., p. vi). Indeed, scholarly works on media and journalism are not fairly represented in Ethiopia's literary production (Afework, 2013, pp. 12-13; Birhanu, 2006, p. 144). In this sense, the current book breaks new ground by focusing on such a neglected profession as journalism in Ethiopia.

Dereje's book is divided into nine chapters that cover the main episodes of the intense life of Pawlos Ñoñño. It begins by reconstructing his upbringing, the only son of a Greek merchant and a Shewan woman who met in Dirre Dawa but soon divorced after Pawlos's birth. Then it follows the footsteps of Pawlos's extraordinary life, from his early break up with school education to his meteoric ascension as Ethiopia's leading journalist. The book provides interesting insights into Pawlos's prolific literary production, which includes twenty one titles, counting his published and unpublished works (see the list of his books on p. 139). Dereje's text makes a fun read while improving our knowledge of Pawlos's figure. There are several anecdotes on the life of Pawlos and insights into his charismatic figure. Of note, for instance, is the scene wherein Pawlos was about to play a game of 'carambola' with the murderous Derg official in Gondar Melaku Tefera and before starting the game he asked the latter not to murder him in case he was victorious (p. 124). Noticeable are also the passages where Dereje recounts some of Pawlos's prominent historical insights (e.g. p. 200-02). Moreover, the biography also provides valuable information on the status of

the Ethiopian mass media and communication. The biography is endowed with several photos that show the life of the biographee and his rise to prominence in the Ethiopian press and media (pp. 277-99) as well as many archival documents (pp. 300-04).

But what is the image that Dereje offers of Pawlos? Dereje characterizes Pawlos as a “journalist and history writer” (pp. 138-151, p. 197) and he champions him as an exceptional and blameless figure (p. 160, 189 and 195). He even heralds Pawlos’s failure to meet professional ethical standards in relation to the coup makers of 1960 and the Ethiopian public (pp. 213-216). Indeed, the approach to the biographee appears often as uncritical (e.g. p. 87, 121, 197, 224-257) and it is not buttressed in other important sources from that particular period (Bahru, 2002; Birhanu, 2005; Gebru, 2016; Markakis, 1977; Mennasemay, 2006; Tibebe Eshete 2010).

Several other shortcomings should also be mentioned. Thus, for instance, Dereje makes use of long quotations and justifies the praxis by saying “I put things as they are for the sake of objectivity” (introductory paragraph to the second page, n.p.). The absence of any type of citation system is also a negative aspect of the book (pp. 13-20). Indeed, the text has neither footnotes, endnotes nor in-text citation (see for example pp. 40-51). The reference entry consists of sources and none of which are cited anywhere in the text (e.g. pp. 242-50). Last but not the least, in his introductory part (second paragraph, n.p.) Dereje claims that the book is the continuation of his senior University essay complemented by extended library and field research. But the truth is that it fails to fulfil the criterion for an academic dissertation. He claims, for instance, having used sources from the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and other institutions, but we are not told exactly what documents were used from these institutions.

In addition to that, the text is punctuated by plenty of instances of omission of terms and spelling errors. The instances are too numerous to be quoted here and a few examples may suffice: እርሱም is wrongly written for እርሱም (p. 230 and 233); instead of እየሰራችሁ ነው he wrote እየሰራችው (p. 44); instead of የተቀጠረኩት it appears የተቀጠሩት (p. 46); ተረጋጎ appears in place of ተረጋግቶ (p. 49), and in place of ይባል እንጂ there is ይባልጃ (p. 57). Punctuation problems are also frequent (e.g. p. 108, third paragraph). Errors of a historical and methodological kind ought to be mentioned too. Dereje erroneously gives two names for one of Emperor Hayle Sillase’s sons, Prince Mekonnen: Hayle Sillase (p. 28) and, the right name, Mekonnen (p. 32).

Last but not the least, the numerous graphic material displayed is impressive but it is organized in such a form – without proper captions and without following a chronological order – that its power to illustrate the text is largely diminished.

Until the date, authors have rarely adventured to research on the history of Ethiopian media and communication services. For this very fact, Dereje’s attempt to produce a biography on Ethiopia’s most renowned journalist deserves praise. True to the fact, the book has several problems that make it a weak reference work on the great journalist least on the history of

Ethiopia's mass media after the liberation. This notwithstanding, as the first ever biography on that famous literate, Dereje's *Yepawlos Noñño heywet tarik* will be an interesting read for those interested in the history of Ethiopia's medias and shall pave the way for further studies on this important part of the political and social life of Ethiopia's contemporary society.

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እኛ እና አብዬቱ (*Jññaænna Abyotu*, 'We and the Revolution'). By Fiqreselasie Wogderes. Addis Ababa: Tsehai Publishers, 2006 A.M. Pp. xx + 450. ISBN: 978-1-59907-078-0. Price: 200.00 ETB.

Ethiopia is exceptional in Africa for not having been colonized. Yet it shares with most of the African countries that doubtful honour of having endured a military dictatorship. The military dictatorship that befell on Ethiopia was the Derg (1974-1991) and Fikreselassie Wogderess, the author of the book under review, was one of its most important figures. Born in 1945, Fikreselassie served as prime minister of the Derg regime from September 1987 to November 1989 serving mainly in the field of foreign relations. In 1991, he was jailed and was charged in absentia by the government of Ethiopia on issues of genocide, murdering individuals and crimes against humanity.

In 2008, he was sentenced to death but, on October 4, 2011, after twenty years of incarceration, he was freed together with sixteen former colleagues. It was during his prison time that Fikreselassie wrote *፤ንሕሳንና ለሃይማኖት*, which was released once he was free. Currently the author lives in Addis Ababa.

Īññænna Abyotu has several interesting aspects that render it an important source for the study of the Derg period. One of them is the extensive analysis of top Derg officials who, after all were Fikreselassie's former colleagues. The author interprets the phases of the Derg's emergency, comparing it, in very typical Marxist fashion, to the Paris Commune of France. Of interest is his insight that the Derg Committee was largely formed by returnee soldiers from the campaign in Congo (pp. 54-50 and 66). Whilst the exact number and identity of the Derg Committee remains still a controversial issue, the book provides some ideas on why it has been so (p. 68). Fiqreselassie also sheds new light on the Derg's main ideological logo, the famous *Ethiopia* Tikdem (i.e. 'Ethiopia First', p.7 8) as well as on the form the creeping autocracy was conducted (p. 91).

One of the main problems in Ethiopian political culture is the loose or even the absent sense of responsibility by its political leaders. Fikreselassie's book scores better than others even in the minor issues and issues such as the political responsibility for mishaps and wrong policies as they are presented in more detail (p. 153). Indeed, the book includes valuable details on political, economical, social, cultural, religious, and artistic policies. Fikreselassie has also the value of showing self-criticism for his own participation in the bloody regime, a fact he blames also on his former colleagues. Yet, the author is rather tenuous in this regard. Thus, he denies any responsibility in setting the country's national agenda (he emphasizes that he just attended "the meetings", chapter 18) and he tends to attribute much of the bloodshed occurred during the Derg on the EPRP and its 'White Terror' (p. 223), remaining silent of the more murderous 'Red Terror'.

Yet, the book has also some limitations that ought to be pointed out. For a book bearing the bombastic title “We and the Revolution” the chronological scope appears as rather short, for it covers not more than three years, 1974-1977. The events before the revolution of 1974 are explained without sources and with rather poor arguments. Fikreselassie, for instance, diminishes the importance of the Gojjam (1968) and Bale (1966-67) peasant rebellions (pp. 15-18) and even assesses them under a negative light by saying that they undermined the consciousness of the people and they were inspired by the *awraja* (province) governors. The writer himself enumerated fuelled causes for opposition like land measurement and the burden of tax, both of which became paradox generalizations.

Some of the ideas pushed forth in *፤ንሕሳስን ለሃይማኖት* are also not clear. For example, the social origin of the soldiers recruited in the humongous army set up by the Derg: Did they come from among the ranks of the nobility or the peasantry? The author states that 95% of the military force recruited

were from poor farmers (pp. 20 and 50) while the Imperial government recruited their forces from the nobility (Amberbir, 1976 A.M).

The book also incurs in unjustified synopses, as when it ignores key episodes during the Derg's early phase, such as the murdering of General Teferi Banti, Atinafu Abate and the persecution of sixty Imperial officials. Accordingly, it presents the almost 'automatic' emergence of Mengistu as the sole dictator of the country, the decease of Hayle Sillase I and the Red Terror. But there might be some clue as to why Fikreselassie has avoided mentioning such important episodes. Thus, according to the recent book by Eshetu Wondimu thirteen members of the Derg, including Teferi Banti and Fikreselassie himself organized a secret plot to kill Mengistu. Once the plotters had put their signature on paper, Fikreselassie would have betrayed them and informed of the situation to Mengistu, who then killed all participants (Eshetu Wondimu, 2006 A.M, p. 24).

ፓሽፔንና ላይወት is the work of a political actor rather than of a professional, academic historian. The book thus is absconding from the discernible crimes, and undermines the people's level of understanding. Yet, the book also provides valuable insights into chapters of the Derg dictatorship that had not been known to date or that had been poorly understood. The contents are also supported with shreds of sources, especially the first two chapters. For these reasons the book is a recommended reading for scholars and the public interested in the Derg regime and, in general, on the era of African dictatorships.

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The Massacre of Debre Libanos: Ethiopia 1937. The Story of one of Fascism's most Shocking Atrocities. By Ian Campbell. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2014. Pp. xlviii + 307; 81 images and 7 maps. ISBN: 978-99944-52-51-4. Price: 120.00 ETB.

The book under review is part of a trilogy dedicated by the author to the massacres perpetrated by Italy during their short-lived occupation of Ethiopia. The first book of the trilogy was published in 2010 and it was an encyclopaedic-like study on the plot to kill General Graziani in 1937 (Campbell,

2010). The trilogy shall be concluded with a third title, soon to appear, dedicated to the Italian massacre of Addis Ababa, which in Ethiopia is known as 'Yekatit 12' (=February 19, [1937]).

The Massacre of Debre Libanos is the outcome of decades of study by Ian Campbell, who is not a trained historian. Indeed Campbell started his involvement with Debre Libanos monastery back in the 1990s as a consultant for a hydro-electric project in northern Shewa (p. xxviii). His visit to the area of Debre Libanos led him to dedicate part of his time working as a development consultant in Ethiopia to the study of this famous monastery, one of the historical centres of Ethiopia's monasticism. Soon his focus of attention shifted to the massacre committed by the Italians on May 21, 1937 against Debre Libanos's monastic community, which had been launched in retaliation to the plot to kill Graziani on February 19 of the same year (see Campbell & Gabre-Tsadik, 1997).

Giving primary attention to this tragic event was more than justified. Not only there were many gaps in the study of this sombre chapter of Italian colonialism, but historians had trusted too much the 'official' account of the massacre, which was based on the letters that General Graziani had sent to Mussolini. In these letters, as Campbell plausibly suggests in the book, Graziani tried to conceal before his superiors in Italy the magnitude of the tragedy and under-reported the number of murdered Ethiopians to 'only' 450, among monks and laymen (p. xxxi). Now, with Campbell's study it can be confidently stated that the tragedy was far larger than believed, that it befell on vast sectors of the local population and that it occurred not in one but in at least nine different locations, between February 22 and late June 1937.

The Massacre of Debre Libanos is structured in six chapters. Chapter 1 ("Prelude") introduces the history of the famous monastery as well as its singular geographical setting, above a cliff overlooking the Siga Wedem Gorge. Chapter 2, "Occupation and resistance", focuses on the resistance to Italian occupation and, specifically, on the escalation of repression under the governorate of General Graziani. Patriotic resistance had one of its main centres of activity in the region of Selale, wherein Debre Libanos is situated and, for some time, resistance was led by the sons of ras Kassa Haylu, the *gabaz* or secular custodian of Debre Libanos monastery (pp. 33 et passim). The tragic fate of three of Kassa's sons, Wendwessen, Aberra and Asfawassen, who in December 1936 were treacherously murdered by orders of Italian generals Biroli and Tracchia (p. 40 et passim) somehow precluded what was to occur five months later. Chapter 3 ("The best-laid plans") shifts the focus towards two accidental witnesses of the soon-to-come massacre, the monks Gebre Giyorgis and *abba* Buruk. Here we encounter one of the assets of the book, which is the skill with which Campbell integrates within the main historical narrative the numerous personal accounts of survivors or witnesses of the massacre that he gathered through innumerable interviews. Then, with the use of contemporary Italian dispatch letters, Campbell depicts the political context that induced the foreign occupiers to launch the 'final solution' for the Debre Libanos monastic centre. Chapter 4 ("The massacre of Debre Libanos") meticulously

reconstructs the days of May 1937 (Ginbot 1929 in the Ethiopian calendar) when the main massacres were perpetrated –between May 21 and 26. Campbell's study shows crystal clear the discipline and secrecy under which the master plan of Italian repression in Ethiopia (the "liquidazione convento di Debra Libanos" as Italian official reports referred to it, p. 70) was carried out. Indeed, the Italian military executed the plan with resolution and discipline, the aim being that nobody could see and nobody could escape (p. 96). So, in order to trap the largest number of Orthodox faithful, the Italians chose Ginbot 12 (May 20) the day to carry out their plan, coinciding with the yearly celebration of the monastery, when thousands of pilgrims flocked there from all corners of the empire (the officer in charge of the operation, General Maletti, however, missed the calendar and initiated the operation two days too early; eventually the main massacre was to be carried out one day after the annual celebration; p. 99). Campbell follows the footsteps of the dozens of Italian officers and *bande militari* that took part in it as well as of the hundreds of victims. Although Campbell does not use the term, after reading this well-crafted chapter we are tempted to call the tragic fate of Debre Libanos a true 'ecclesiocide', the purpose of the Italians being to destroy the very core of Ethiopia's Christianity, accused of being behind all patriotic resistance against the colonial power. The chapter does not leave any episode unturned and it also reports the looting of the treasures of the monastery (pp. 121, 140-41), which are assumed by the author—though no serious research has been carried out so far—to have ended up in the possession of Generals Maletti and Graziani in their Italian villas. Campbell's account also proves conclusively that the massacre was carried out at eight different spots (table on p. 171), which should be nine if we include the fate of those 1,100 Debre Libanos inhabitants who were deported to the Danane concentration camp near Mogadishu, most of whom died of disease and malnutrition (Chapter 5, "The persecution of the house of Tekle Haymanot"). Chapter 6 opens by focusing on the impact the massacre had on the Italian colonial state itself, for an ironical 'victim' of the tragedy was General Graziani himself, who in early 1938 was replaced by the more compromising and soft-handed Duke of Aosta as the head of the colony. Then it presents how after the liberation the monastery, slowly and painfully but also surely, recovered its past strength.

The book includes a final, well-documented chapter (not numbered) focusing on the stolen heritage of the monastery (pp. 217 et passim; see also Table in p. 228) and on the fate of some of the butchers and the few survivors of the massacre (p. 240 et passim). Finally, at the end of the book ten appendices provide ample documentary data, chiefly a chronology of the massacre (Appendix I), a selection of contemporary Italian archival documents (Appendices III to IX) and a list of the monastery staff who died in the massacre (Appendix X).

While carefully written, the book suffers from a poor editing, which surely is not simply the responsibility of the author but can be blamed on the prestigious house under which the book has been published. Some typos for instance ought to be noted: "da" for "di" (p. 61 note 63), the word "crescendo" separated by a paragraph (p. 81), and "of, certain" for "of certain" (p. 102). In addition, the same picture is used twice (Figures 3 and 41). But

more problematic is the low quality of reproduction of the graphic material, which had it been printed properly would have been one of the main assets of the book. Last but not the least, a generally poor layout make the book appear as a second rank monograph while the text would have deserved a much better presentation.

The Massacre of Debre Libanos is a well-documented and well written monograph on one of the most sombre episodes of European colonialism in Africa. Ian Campbell has done a superb work of research and analysis, re-assessing the truthfulness of well-known archival material, such as Italian military dispatches, and adding to the picture dozens of invaluable oral testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the massacre. The magnitude of the tragedy makes the book a difficult read, as one turns its pages and, little by little, gets to know of the fate of thousands of religious leaders, nuns, children, elders and pilgrims who were murdered by the foolishness of the colonial 'reason'. Yet, this should not prevent us in this journal to vividly recommend the work to historians of European colonialism in Africa and to those interested in the history of contemporary Ethiopia.

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Nurturing Language and Learning: Development of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Infants and Toddlers. By Patricia Elizabeth Spencer and Lynne Sanford Koester. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 404 + XVII; 12 images. ISBN: 978-0-19-993132-3. Price: 38.50 USD.

This book is called to become a reference source for the studies on deafness and the professional treatment of this impairment. The authors have a long career in the field. Patricia Elizabeth Spencer has been a teacher, assessment specialist, and educational advocate for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, with a long career at the Gallaudet Research Institute and with broad experience internationally as research and educational consultant. She has also written extensively on issues related to development and education of deaf and hard-of-hearing children. Lynne Sanford Koester recently retired after twenty five years of teaching developmental psychology at the University of Montana and at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro.

She has also worked in Ethiopia, Austria, and Germany, and is the former Director of Intercultural Youth and Family Development.

The present book is the result of decades of collective research on education and human development, developmental psychology, language studies on families and infants-toddlers with typical hearing and language development of deaf and hard-of-hearing children. The rationale for the book is condensed in a row of questions raised by the authors at the beginning of their work: "We reasoned that the story of development has been told often enough regarding babies and toddlers who have typical hearing. Why not produce such story for those whose parents find out, often within weeks of giving birth, that their babies will have added challenges due to limited hearing abilities? How will these babies be similar to those with typical hearing, and how might they differ? What kinds of parenting attitudes and activities will be especially supportive? What kinds and levels of development can be expected when these babies reach 3 years of age and their early intervention services (if available at all) have ended?" (pp. xi).

The book is composed of twelve chapters which are organized according to the age of the infants, starting from near birth to the three years old and subsequently. Every chapter is structured according to the following sections: questions to consider, cases, summary, notes and charts. The book includes an appendix with a list of organizations and websites working with deaf and hard-of-hearing infants and toddlers with which the authors have been well acquainted.

The first chapter (pp. 1-30) highlights the fact that every child is a gift and a challenge regardless of his/her disability. Here the authors emphasize that any intervention to a disability, be it medical, language-based or educational, will be the more effective the earlier it is carried out. Generally speaking, it is the conviction of the Authors that "hearing does not necessarily result in limited accomplishment/use of one's potential, if language (signed, spoken, or both) is learned early and if it is supported by experiences (e.g. support the child with visual attention, promoting thinking and problem solving skills)." (pp. 27-28).

The second chapter addresses the question "What can my baby hear?" (pp. 31-63). The authors explain here how to assess the hearing level of young babies as well as of older babies and toddlers. They emphasize that "based on behaviour alone, it is difficult to know whether a young baby hears a sound; identifying deaf and hard-of-hearing newborns and babies up to about 3 months of age depends to a great degree on the use of modern assessment innovations and technologies." (pp. 32-49). Thus, along with personal efforts to help their young babies and infant toddlers who are deaf and hard-of hearing parents are strongly recommended to cooperate with professionals in the assessment/screening process and the service provision.

The third chapter, "Welcome to the world", discusses the developmental aspects of the children. Before birth, during the so-called prenatal period, babies receive some information from the outside world through their

senses. Accordingly, the senses of taste, smell and touch, the orientation (or position) and movement of the body and even hearing and limited vision operate during the last three months of a full-term pregnancy. After birth, the senses continue to develop and become refined through interactions with others and through stimulating experiences within the infant environment. This occurs particularly during the first three months, when the brain is most active in areas involved in processing sights, sounds, and touch.

The fourth chapter, "Early parenting goals", highlights important differences between hearing and deaf parents. Thus, hearing parents need more support and guidance on how to help their child. However, deaf parents have better potentials of tactile and visual stimuli by which they can easily help the deaf and hard-of hearing infant receive appropriate multi modal communications. Hence, for parents effective early intervention programs are necessary to reduce their stress of having a new baby who is deaf/hard-of hearing, and serves the baby or toddler as his/her development proceeds.

The fifth chapter addresses the question "Why is early learning so important?" The authors conclude that "studies that have been conducted in many places around the world suggest that early sensory experiences or lack of them have a long lasting effect on development" (pp.128). This experiential phase is particularly important during the first six months of life. Then, experiences can have both short and long term effect on the children's achievements.

In the sixth chapter, "Learning, feeling and communicating", the authors provide precious insights on how growth unfolds during the first six months after birth. Message centres and systems are developing rapidly in the brain. Motor and physical behaviours become more intentional and more controlled, the baby's memory is developing, cause-effect relations are learned, and emotions are differentiated and expressed. Next, in the chapter "On the move", the book unveils the important fact that babies who are developing at typical rate, regardless of their hearing abilities achieve important milestones (e.g. motor development, visual input, coordinate visual attention between objects or events, representation ability, observation and play experiences) during the age of six to about twelve months.

The eighth chapter, "Little communicators", focuses on the phase when infants reach the first year of age; then most babies (regardless of hearing levels) are effective communicators (e.g. give visual attention, to pupil and communications, explore, master objects and situations use gestures and facial expressions and vocalization to express needs and interests and the like). Next, in "The symbol users", the focus is on the period between the twelfth and eighteenth months, when babies develop the ability to represent objects, events, people and even themselves. On the same age, babies learn by being accompanied through experiences mainly when they are engaged in activities and backed up by language expressions in activities and interactions. The authors provide the necessary recommendations on what to do

for the concerned parents, care givers, special needs educators, early intervention specialty and professionals.

In the tenth chapter, “Almost two and what is new!”, the age-frame eighteen to twenty four months is discussed. This second half of the second year of life is typically one of a rapid development of motor skills, ability of representation (objects, events and feelings using symbols), complex and sequenced language and play and interaction skills. Following that, “Little Psychologists and budding linguists”, focus moves to the age of two to three, when overall development occurs at a typical rate and, if they are provided with opportunities of meaningful and accessible communicative interactions, children will have astounding language development. They will be able to show language expressions and more or less alike with majority of adults and children in their respective communities.

The twelfth and concluding chapter, “Where we are ...and where we are going”, raises the important issue that there is no “one best way” to raise deaf and hard-of hearing children. Here the authors revisit the previous eleven chapters and discuss the progress and challenges of children with hearing impairment and their parents. They conclude with their confidence of a brighter future and call up for a concerted effort by all the concerned to make people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing lead productive and satisfying lives. Their call is also shared by the reviewer: “continuing research, clinical and educational practice and empowerment, and increased confidence in families, all justify the ever greater expectations we share for all our children.” (pp. 367).

Professional Perspectives on Deafness: Evidence and Applications is a valuable contribution to the study and treatment of deafness and hearing issues among children. The book will surely become a standard reference for parents, care givers, special needs educators, early intervention specialty and professionals who live with, care and educate deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

Tadesse Abera

University of Gondar

ACADEMIC NEWS

Gondar Archives Project Report on Experience Sharing Field Trip

The Gondar Zone Archives: A Summary

Gondar used to be the country's political centre since its foundation around 1636 to the early nineteenth century. The central position of Gondar continued well into contemporary times. The Italians made Gondar the capital of the Amhara *governorato* ('province') and, later on, during the Hayle Sil-lase I regime the city was the capital of the vast Begemdir and Semien *teqlay gizat* ('governorate general'). Successively, during the Derg regime the province of Begemdir was renamed Gondar *kifle hager* with Gondar as its capital.

Throughout the times the administrative archives of both *teqlay gizat* and *kifle hager* Gondar administrative divisions have been preserved at the North Gondar Zone Administration Office in Gondar city. Since its foundation the Office occupies a modernist building from the Italian occupation, the former *Commando Truppe*, i.e. the office of the chief of staff of the army, built in 1936-37. In addition to administrative files from the Hayle Sillase I and Derg's periods, the archive also includes some earlier documents from the Italian period as well as more recent documents. These documents are typically stored in standard office folders. A rough estimate of the contents of the archive is 2,528 folders for the upper two rooms (those were visited by the team) and probably the same amount for the lower rooms (which were difficult to access). In total, the archive is estimated to contain a minimum of 5,000 folders and a maximum of 10,000 folders.

This important archive, however, is in a critical condition. The historical documents are threatened by several factors, from climatic (rain and humidity) and biological hazards (bird's dung, rats, mould etc.) to human mis-handling. Moreover, the folders have neither been catalogued, nor been inventoried or labelled properly so that its consultation is cumbersome. These conditions notwithstanding several researchers, local and foreign, have carried out important research in the archive and have stated the importance of this centre for the study of the recent history of the Gondar province and of the contemporary Ethiopian state.

In order to study the solutions that could save the archive from its dire current state and to render it suitable for public consultation and research, in early 2016 the University of Gondar, under the Department of History and Heritage Management established a committee. The members of the committee are Dr Andreu Martinez, Mr Girma Tayachew, and Mr Abebe Fantahun. The committee continues with previous efforts carried out by members of the Department of History and Heritage Management to study and

preserve the Gondar historical archives (see Debash Yimam, Ebrahim Damtew, Adera Getaneh, Awegichew Amare & Marshet Girmay, 2014; Debash Yimam & Ebrahim Damtew, 2015). Early in the year the committee drafted a proposal that was submitted to the university authorities. Based on the proposal, the committee prepared an experience sharing field trip in different archives and institutes located in Addis Ababa and Debre Markos University.

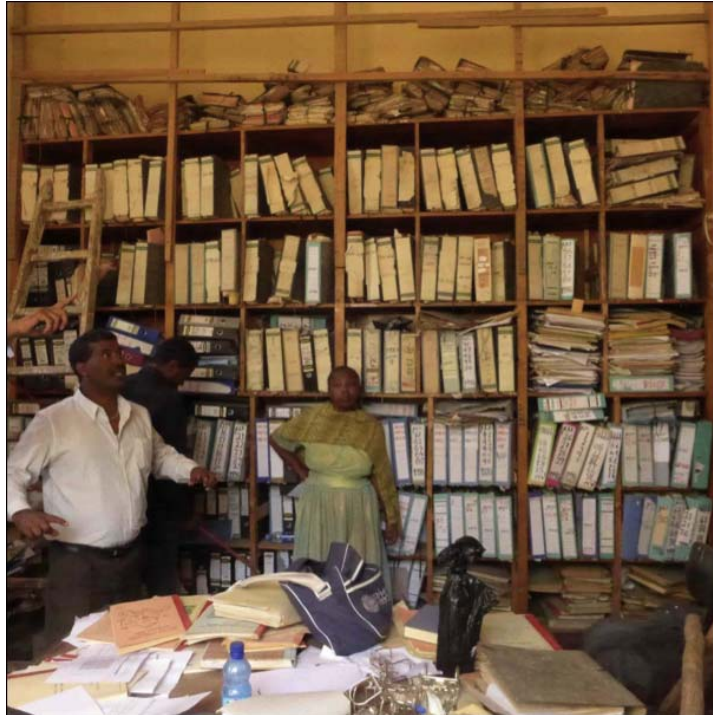


Figure 1: *View of one of the storage shelves of Gondar Zonal Archives*
Source: Photo Andreu Martínez, 2016.



Figure 2: *Detail view of damage caused by bird's dung in Gondar Zonal Archives.*
Source: Photo Andreu Martínez, 2016.

Experience sharing field trip: Addis Ababa

On November 28, 2016, the three committee members went by car from Gondar to Addis Ababa. On the next day, the committee visited the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), where they met *ato* Ahmed Zekaria, coordinator of the IES. An interview was conducted with Ahmed. He explained that the buildings in Gennate Leul palace were given to Addis Ababa University by order of Emperor Haile Sillase I. The decision was taken at a critical time because by then it was known that several documents and objects had been looted and had been sold to foreigner collectors and dealers.

The IES officially opened in 1963 and it included three main centres or areas of activity:

- Studies and research
- Book centre
- Archival centre

The Institution was run by Stanislaw Chojnacki. Since its inception the IES functioned as a repository of public and private documents, objects and art. Government ex-ministers and top officials, seeing the value of such an institution, submitted their documents and collections to the IES.

Ahmed continued the interview emphasizing that archival preservation is a difficult task because it is like collecting the country's secrets.

Ahmed concluded the interview with the following recommendations:

- the first task shall be equipping the building with good quality shelves and making sure that the atmospheric conditions are suitable for the documents;
- implementing a digitizing programme that shall both help preserving the documents and make them easily available to the researchers;
- making the archive a repository not only of the Gondar city and region but also of the University, since this is the oldest institution at the country level;
- when the documents are stored and classified, the task shall be to arrange them based on themes like security, economics, history, tax, religion, justice and so on.
- finally, proper consideration must be given to the space, because IES has been suffering from lack of space for its archive. To remedy this situation the centre received the Wolde Mesqel residence in Kazanchis area where currently a large part of the archive is preserved.

The next day, the committee met with the President of the IES, Dr Ahmed Hassen. Dr Ahmed shared with us his views on archives. He explained that old archives are the vital properties of the society and they need our immediate action in order to preserve and transfer them to the next generation. According to him, a wide space such as a hall type room has to be arranged and the documents should be placed in sections according to their main thematic, such as religious, educational, political, socio-economic and oral

sources. Documents can be collected from individuals who had direct relation with the previous governments. This type of sources should be catalogued according to the place where they were obtained, the name of the person who delivered the document and the date of the delivery. Moreover, Dr Ahmed advised us to be careful when transferring the archive's documents from their original location due to the risk of losing pages and he also warned of the possible health hazards that might affect the documents, such as dust and chemicals from old papers.

Further points raised by Dr Ahmed can be summarized as follows:

- the first activity will be to constitute a permanent committee. The committee shall be formed by professionals from different disciplines but it should be led by historians;
- following this, a draft proposal should be written;
- the archive should be organized with categories based on themes;
- the documents should be digitized and converted into soft copy. Dr Ahmed reminded the situation he faced when the Ministry of Defence once had the intention to destroy all the archived documents that were older than 2008/09;
- an additional task of the archivists shall be to conduct oral history interviews in order to create an archive of the oral history of the Gondar region.



Figure 3: Abebe Fentahun and Girma Tayachew during the interview with Dr Ahmed Hassen

Source: Photo Andreu Martinez, 2016.

On December 1, the committee visited the Wolde Mesqel Centre in Kazan-chis area, the physical place of the archives of the IES. The Centre includes a large number of documents that seem to be properly kept. However, the Centre has some shortcomings, such as the fact that it is not opened on a

regular basis and so researchers can only access to it on demand and depending on the availability of the staff.



Figure 4: *Main building of the Wolde Mesqel Centre Archives, Kazanchis*
Source: Photo Andreu Martinez, 2016.

On December 2, the committee visited the National Archives of Ethiopia (NAE). The Public Library “Wemzekir” currently the Ethiopian National Archives and Library Agency was established in 1944. The Public Library was first inaugurated by Emperor Hayle Sillase I and started providing service with books donated by the ruler. Since the NAE was founded when most African countries were under colonial rule, this institution became a symbol of Ethiopia’s freedom. Yet, the archives were only properly constituted in 1977 (Smidt, 2014). The building of the NAE, located at the heart of the city, is an impressive structure that dates from the 1970s and that hosts the National Library and a research centre as well. In 1999 A.M. (2007/08 A.D.), by proclamation No.179/1999, the Ethiopian National Archives and Library Agency was upgraded to national institution receiving the new name of Ethiopian National Archives and Library Agency and with the values of effective and efficient service delivery, transparency, responsiveness, participatory leadership, respect professional ethics, and readiness to change (Ethiopian National Archives and Library Agency Brochure, 2016). The Agency has been delivering service to researchers, scholars, academics, writers, higher education students and the public at large (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1999 A.M.).

At the NAE we first met Mr. Mekonen Kefale, director of the Customers’ Relation and Studies Directorate. Mekonen explained the ways how to preserve and organize the archives in terms of its legal framework. The archives found in the regions are considered the property of regional archive whereas the archives related to national issues are considered national

property and collected at the NAE. The NAE hosts more than 350,000 documents. Most of them are collected from the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Interior was an independent and centralized office serving from 1944 to 1991. All circular letters and messages of the country passed through this office.

After the talk with Mr. Mekonen we met Mr Abiy Hailu, the team leader of Microfilms and Manuscripts Service Delivery. Mr Abiy briefed us on the general services delivered by the NAE. He also advised on how to manage and organize archives centres. Thus, he shared his ideas about what the NAE expects from the University of Gondar in order to establish the Gondar archives. The archive will need a structure that encompasses crucial issues such as budget and manpower as well as a legal framework.

Following that, Mr Isayas, member of service delivery, offered us a short visit to the archives. This enabled us to see one of the huge rooms that shelters some of the 350,000 files preserved at the NAE. Mr Isayas briefed us on things related to the archive's organization, such as the document arrangement method. He also indicated some important collections hosted at NAE, such as the personal documents of Blata Mersienhazen and Kebede Tessema, two influential courtiers of Hayle Sillase I regime. He drew out a file from the collection of Zewdie Gebresilasse and showed us one of the latter's private letters written some fifty years back and which was dedicated to the benefits of building a dam on the River Abbay (Blue Nile).

The NAE has a Microfilm and Video Centre that is run by Ms. Martha Mer-sha, senior expert of microfilm and video. There, documents such as *menzuma*, psalms, traditional and modern songs, are preserved. This office also collects film documents by three methods: by purchasing, by proclamation (legal repository), and by exchange.

On Monday, December 5, the committee visited again the NAE in order to be shown the protocols and directives used by the institution. In 2012 the NAE developed an appraisal criterion in order to select the documents that could be archived and those that are not of interest for the centre. It also issued a legal framework policy that makes of the NAE a model institute at the country level.

The staffs of NAE conducted a study of the documents from the Ministry of Interior and selected those that fit a series of predetermined criteria. Following that all 'dead files' were transferred to NAE.

The collections today preserved in the NAE can be summarized as follows: newspapers published since 1925

- periodicals and magazines since 1941
- charts, pamphlets, photographs, private documents and research papers
- international organizations' documents
- official government and public documents
- audio and video recordings

- ancient manuscripts
- about 16,000 microfilmed documents
- legal deposit collections
- bibliographic publications
- ancient maps and books published abroad about Ethiopia
- posters and other products published in various languages.

Among its most valuable treasures, the NAE is the custodian of about twelve ancient manuscripts that were registered as world literary heritages by UNESCO in 2005. These include a *Psalterium Davids* (16th century), St Paul's Epistles (15th century), The Four Gospels (14th century), the Homily of the Passion of Our Lord and the Service for the Passion Week (15th c), the Book of Enoch (15th c), the *Fetha Negest* (Nomocanon; 19th c), the Anaphoras (17th c), A History of Menelik II (19th c), A History of the Kings (20th c). In addition, it has paramount documents dating to the nineteenth century, including a Letter of King Tewodros II to Queen Victoria of England, A Letter of King Menelik II to Tsar Nicolas, and a letter of King Sahle Sillase of Shoa to the Queen of Great Britain (Ethiopian National Archives and Library Agency, Brochure, 2016).

Experience sharing field trip: Debre Markos

On December 6 and 7 the committee moved to Debre Markos. The aim was to visit the Haddis Alemayehu Culture and Studies Centre at Debre Markos University. The archive originally was kept at the 'Beta Mengest' (govern building or palace) of *negus* Teklehaimanot in Debre Markos town. The origins of the archive go back to Hayle Sillase I's regime when Debre Markos became the capital of the Gojjam governorate general, which was divided into seven *awrajas* (i.e. provinces). Then official government documents were simply kept on the floor at different rooms of the Beta Mengest and the officials did not care about them. Ultimately, soon after Debre Markos University was founded, its officials showed an interest in this regional archive and they received a positive response from the government officials. This led to the transfer of the archive to the University, which became its custodian.



Figure 5: *View of one of the storing rooms of Haddis Alemayehu Culture and Studies Centre, Debre Markos University. In the middle ato Gizachew Andargie, Director of the Institute; to his left, Mr Solomon, head officer of the archives.*

Source: Photo Andreu Martinez, 2016.

Figure 6: *Detail view of one of the rooms of the archive.*

Source: Photo Andreu Martinez, 2016.



Figure 6: *Detail view of one of the rooms of the archive*

Source: Photo Andreu Martinez, 2016.

The responsibility of safeguarding and managing the archive was given to the Department of History and Heritage Management of the same university. According to *ato* Gizachew Andargie from Haddis Alemayehu Culture and Studies Centre the first task of the Debre Markos University's archives committee was drafting a proposal with the help of all department staffs. Then a catalogue number was prepared and the files were registered. Following this, an Id. number was given for each classifier inside the files. The work of registration and documentation took about six months. Thereafter, in 2011, the documents were moved and transported to Debre Markos University. The staff members also brought archives from Hulet Eju Enessie *woreda*, Motta town. The total documents are currently being preserved in four different locations. This fact makes the archive difficult to operate and it also renders it of difficult access for the researchers.

Ato Gizachew Andargie continued explaining that the documents were arranged according to eleven subjects, including financing, land issues, education, justice, boundary demarcation, and tax. The total number of folders is 11,000. Until the present date several researchers have used the archives, including national and foreign scholars. Among the problems faced by the Centre are shortage of rooms and shortage of manpower.

Problems of the archives

During the visit to different centres, the problems observed by the Gondar committee are the following ones:

- Institute of Ethiopian Studies: lack of storage room for its ever expanding collections and inability to digitize the documents
- NAE: lack of specialized manpower
- Debre Markos University: lack of a large storage room, shortage of office rooms and lack of manpower

Ways forward

After the field visit and experience sharing, the committee has established a plan to be undertaken by University of Gondar.

Short term plans:

- requesting temporary rooms
- purchase of request of standard shelving furniture to store archival documents
- preparing a project proposal in order to bring the Gondar Zonal Archives to University of Gondar
- provide training on archival science to University of Gondar staff members and officers from North and South Gondar Zones.
- make a temporary register (inventory) of the archival documents
- establish funding strategies

Long term plans

- construction of a standard building to host the archival centre
- organizing human resources
- make the archival centre open for researchers

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Girma Tayachew, Abebe Fentahun, Andreu Martinez
University of Gondar

**Hiob Ludolf Centre Summer School for Ethiopian Studies, Hamburg,
27 September to 1 October 2016**

An international school on Ethiopian and Eritrean Manuscript studies was held in Hiob Ludolf Institute of Ethiopian Studies (HLCES), Hamburg University, Germany. The school was organized by the HLCES at Hamburg University with support from Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures and the projects TraCES and Beta Maṣāḥəft: Manuscripts of Ethiopia and Eritrea

The school started on September 26, 2016, with a registered number of over sixty participants. The main objective of the conference was creating

platforms to share research experiences concerning oriental manuscript studies in the contemporary digital era. Senior scholars from within the discipline were invited from different countries, including Germany, Italy, and Russia. They shared their lifetime experiences and presented research papers on the thematic area.

The school was officially opened on September 27 with an inaugural speech by Prof. Dr. Alessandro Bausi, the Head of HLCES. The training continued for the following five days. The training begun by an introduction to Ethiopian and Eritrean manuscript cultures and by a history of the research in these fields. The presenters pondered on more than a century old research tradition and progress in the discipline. Beside this, other lectures focused on research methodology and theoretical explanations of codicology on Ethiopian and Eritrean manuscripts, philology, indexing and cataloguing. The programme also included a practical session wherein trainees were invited to engage themselves on cataloguing manuscripts under the guidance of the higher-ranking scholars of HLCES. In addition, hindrances in field research and potential solutions were discussed among participant and researchers.

Junior researchers engaged with Ethiopian and Eritrean manuscript studies participated in the training. Almost half of the trainees were Ethiopian and Ethiopian by birth and the rest European. Eritrea was represented by a fellow from Asmara. Mekele University sent a large group of participants compared with other Ethiopian institutes. Other Ethiopian institutes represented were Addis Ababa University, Bahir Dar University and my own centre, University of Gondar. The training finalized on October 1, 2016 and a certificate was given to the participants.

Personally, it was a great opportunity to participate, together with other Ethiopian and Eritrean scholars, in the summer school. The school gave us the chance to learn scientific methodologies in manuscript studies and to get experience from experts in the field. Another positive thing is that the HLCES has the intention to repeat the same program in the coming years, allowing other junior researchers from Ethiopia and Eritrea to profit from it. Yet, the length of the training, which was held only for a week, was too short to let me getting acquainted with the new city and the discipline. Additionally, the grant generously given by the HLCES to some of the participants, including myself, did not cover transportation expenses and only accommodation expenses and a per diem money was granted. I hope that in the future the HLCES will tackle this issue and thus help interested junior researchers from Ethiopia and Eritrea who live of modest incomes to benefit from the programme. Last but not the least, I am convinced that the knowledge and experiences acquired during the school will help me in supporting University of Gondar in launching in the near future relevant projects focusing on the important discipline of manuscript studies.

Sisay Sahile

University of Gondar

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

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Acknowledgements

At the end of the manuscript the author should acknowledge *briefly*: (a) contributions that need acknowledging but do not justify authorship; (b) acknowledgements of technical help received by the author; (c) acknowledgements of financial and material support received by the author, specifying the nature of support; and (d) study subjects and others who contributed in the design, data collection, and analysis of the study.

References

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